THE EMERGENCE OF PENTECOSTALISM IN OKLAHOMA: 1909-1930

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Abstract: This thesis examines the development of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in the Twin Territories and early Oklahoma, from sectarian movement to formalized institution, that helped lay the foundations for the denomination's national and global development. Looking at the background as an eccentric holiness sect to a loosely organized Pentecostal denomination in 1909, built by part-time administrators and a predominately lay pastorate. The Pentecostal Holiness Church evolved into a traditionally structured evangelical denomination with salaried executive staff and professional clergy. The church faced social demonization for its distinct theologies including the belief in *glossolalia* or speaking in unknown tongues and other ecstatic methods of worship. In the earliest years of the movement the adherents held countercultural social beliefs, with many practitioners objecting to the participation in World War I and some ministers preaching socialism from their pulpit. While they abandoned many of their radical leanings by the 1920s, their eschatological beliefs led them to allowing women pastors despite their conservative views regarding women's domestic and societal roles. The people of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma from 1909-1930, were predominately rural, lacking access to power structures, but established the western most stronghold for the budding denomination.

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CHAPTER I

Background and Introduction

Pentecostalism is an evangelical Protestant denomination, originating in the American West at the turn of the twentieth century. The sect's theological heritage stems primarily from John Wesley and early Methodist theology, and aspects of the "Higher Thought" movement in England.[1] More directly, the Pentecostal people emphasized in this work were born out of a Wesleyan offshoot, the nineteenth-century Holiness movement, begun by those who felt that Methodism had abandoned the teachings of John Wesley.[2] Growing rapidly in the United States throughout the beginning of the twentieth-century, the nascent movement came to Oklahoma shortly after statehood, setting strong roots in the burgeoning state, placing the headquarters for one of the movement's vital denominations, the present-day International Pentecostal-Holiness Church (IPHC), in Bethany, Oklahoma.

[1] Donald W. Dayton, "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* 2 (1980), 7.

[2] Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 184-5.

This work aims to look at the how the early adherents laid the foundation for the movement in Oklahoma, the most western IPHC stronghold for nearly two decades, and the societal issues that affected them. The Pentecostal-Holiness Church in Oklahoma began as a maverick sectarian movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, overcoming social calamities and internal strife, and evolved into a formalized institution with professional clergy by the rise of its second generation of leadership in 1930. These early roots in Oklahoma played an instrumental role in the maturation of a denomination boasting over four million members worldwide, today.[3]

The Pentecostal movement, or the "Holy Ghost religion", as described by historian Grant Wacker, is an anomaly for many contemporary minds including religious devotees.[4] The religious sect's most distinct element is its belief in *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues. Believers identify *glossolalia* as an entirely new language, a spiritual language understood only by God. The act of speaking in tongues occurs in conjunction with congregational worship or prayer. At times, the recipient of *glossolalia* is believed to be delivering a message from God to the people in attendance. In such

[3] International Pentecostal Holiness Manual 2009-2013 (Franklin Springs, GA: LifeSprings Resources, 2009), 8.

[4] Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 18.

instances, they believe another person that is present receives the ability to interpret the message into the congregation's native tongue.[5]

Defined by its exuberant and unorthodox style of worship, Pentecostalism thrives in the twenty-first century. Pentecostalism is home to approximately 280 million adherents worldwide[6] and plays a key role in the current shift of Christianity to the Global South.[7] The Global South is a region made up of Latin American countries, Africa, and non-Japanese Asian countries, primarily defined by their economic status in post-World War II society.[8] Philip Jenkins likens the importance of Pentecostalism to other great twentieth century "-isms" including fascism and communism. He goes further, arguing that "since there were only a handful of Pentecostals in 1900, and several hundred million today, is it not reasonable to identify this as the most successful social movement of the past century?"[9] It makes up ten percent of American Protestantism, which is on par with Methodism and greater than the combined Lutheran, Presbyterian,

[5] Pentecostals take this practice from the biblical texts, such as Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12.

[6] "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," *Pew Research Center* (December 2011): 17.

[7] "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," *Pew Research Center* (December 2011), 17. As of 2011 the global South makes up sixty-one percent of the Christian population in the world, as the North (primarily Europe and North America) moves towards cultural secularization.

[8] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-4.

[9] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom,* 9.

and Episcopalian denominations.[10] The "holy spirit religion" grew especially in post-World War II America, as revivals dotted the country's landscape and Pentecostal-Holiness and Assembly of God churches began to sprout throughout the nation and the Sooner State.

Pentecostalism was virtually ignored by classic general surveys of American religious history until the 1990s. Several national scaled studies of Pentecostalism were published previously, but they tend to suffer from the commonly present problems in church histories. Often, general studies show more interest in the impact of Pentecostalism on the charismatic movements that existed within mainline denominations, from Roman Catholicism to Southern Baptist. The first prominent study was Vinson Synan's, 1971 *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*. In his original edition, Synan focuses on the Wesleyan background, influence, and development of the movement.[11] Edith Blumhofer's dissertation, *The 'Overcoming Life'*, argued that Pentecostalism's lineage was not solely from Holiness traditions, but came from reformed traditions as well. She points out that Pentecostal traditions stretched back to Charles Finney and the Keswick movement in England. Inspired by American Holiness theology, Keswickian thought or The Higher Life movement, placed an emphasis on the

[10] "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow," *Pew Research Center*, (May 2015): 101-2.
[11] Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), xi.

Christian's ability overcome sinful temptations and live a "spirit-filled" life.[12] Synan reworked his subsequent editions to include these corrections, though his work's primary emphasis remained on the Holiness aspects of the movement's history.[13] While internally historians studied the broader origins, caught in their own "great men" model of study, sociologist Robert Maples Anderson's *Visions of the Disinherited* in 1979 more closely probed the people who made up the early sectarian movement. Anderson found the Pentecostal movement as a religious wave made up of the poor, uneducated, and disinherited.[14] Anderson's argument has held incredible staying power, coloring the understanding of Pentecostals at a seemingly universal scope. Anderson's work is one of the first and the most thorough examinations of the early history of the movement and its people, blending sociological and historical analysis, making it the influential text for over two decades. In 2001, Grant Wacker's work, *Heaven Below*, built on Anderson's monograph, but was not particularly concerned with theological development, institutional histories, or the ways and whims of the famous leaders of any era. Wacker divides his study on early Pentecostals topically, focusing on social and cultural perspectives. Here Wacker concludes that the "Holy Ghost" people varied more than

[12] D.D. Bundy, "Keswick Higher Life Movement," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 820-821.

[13] Edith L. Waldvogel, "The 'Overcoming Life': A Study in the Reformed Evangelical Origins of Pentecostalism" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1977).

[14] Robert Maples Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Anderson suggested. While many Pentecostals were "disinherited," they were also middle class and educated.[15]

Academic histories on Pentecostals in Oklahoma are few in number and limited in scope. Oklahoma as a specific geographical parameter for the historical study of Pentecostalism is absent from the volumes of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, journal, *Pneuma*. In addition, Pentecostalism as a historical topic or a demographic has not found a home in the pages of the state's historical journal, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*. George Harold Paul's 1965 dissertation, *Religious Frontiers*, follows the "great man" model at the state level, examining the life and role of Dan T. Muse in building the Pentecostal Holiness Church in the state.[16] Leroy Hawkins's thesis, *History of the Assemblies of God in Oklahoma*, gives an overview of the experiences and establishment of the denomination for its first fifteen years within the Sooner State.[17] Paul subsequently published, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, paring down his dissertation into an efficient biography of the Pentecostal Holiness's beloved Muse.[18] A folklorist and rhetorician, Kristen Dayle Welch tackles Oklahoma Pentecostals through women pastors, in her 2007

[15] Wacker, Heaven Below.

[16] George Harold Paul, "The Religious Frontier in Oklahoma: Dan T. Muse and the Pentecostal Holiness Church" (PhD diss. The University of Oklahoma, 1965).

[17] Leroy Wesley Hawkins, "A History of the Assemblies of God in Oklahoma: The Formative Years, 1914-1929" (master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1972).

[18] Harold Paul, *Dan T. Muse: From Printer's Devil to Bishop* (Franklin Springs, GA: Advocate Press, 1976).

dissertation, *Oklahoma Women Preachers, Pioneers, and Pentecostals*, analyzing some of the rhetoric surrounding the women ministers of the Pentecostal Holiness Church from inception into the twenty-first century.[19] Her book, *Women with the Good News*, heavily edits her doctoral work, emphasizing her personal experiences and performing more as a rumination.[20] Jim Hunter studied selected Pentecostal and Charismatic televangelist ministers in Tulsa from 1945-1985. He briefly outlines the religious background of Tulsa in his dissertation, *A Gathering of Sects*.[21] Oral Roberts, famed evangelist, personality, and founder of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, was a member of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma. Several published works look at his life and ministry with a variety of perspectives, the most prominent being David Edwin Harrell, Jr.'s 1985 *Oral Roberts: An American Life*.[22]

This thesis carries on from George Harold Paul's dissertation, looking at the establishment and development of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma as a vantage point to view the beliefs and experiences of Pentecostals within the state from the

[19] Kristen Dayle Welch, "Oklahoma Women Preachers, Pioneers, and Pentecostals: An Analysis of the Elements of Collective and Individual Ethos within the Selected Writings of Women Preachers of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church" (PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 2007).

[20] Welch, *'Women with the Good News': The Rhetorical Heritage of Pentecostal Holiness Women Preachers* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010)

[21] Jim Ernest Hunter, Jr., "A Gathering of Sects: Revivalistic Pluralism in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1945-1985" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1986).

[22] David Edwin Harrell, *Oral Roberts: an American Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

earliest periods until 1930. During this period, the institutions of the church developed beyond the early functions of a fledging sect and became a solidified Protestant denomination with salaried administrators and organizational structure, while also evolving toward an educated clergy. Through study of conference manuals and minutes, one begins to grasp the demographics and views of the lay leaders of the church, seeing a people similar to those described in both Anderson and Wacker. Further research is necessary to draw concrete conclusions, but the Oklahoman congregants of the Pentecostal Holiness Church were predominately rural, the pastorate appeared poor, and the people were either on the margins of society or perceived themselves to be.

Background of the Pentecostal Movement

The story of Pentecostalism has many potential points of origin. With an examination of the theological and institutional development of Pentecostalism, a logical beginning is the eighteenth-century English minister, John Wesley. Wesley, the preeminent force behind Methodism, ushered into mainstream Christian thought several influential and controversial doctrines. Wesley adhered to Arminianism, the theological equivalent of libertarian free will.[23] The Anglican vicar was accused of "semi-pelagianism", a heresy stemming from a fourth century figure named Pelagius, who denied original sin and that humanity lived in a natural state of error before God.

[23] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 326.

Pelagius, from Roman controlled Britain, thought it was possible to lead a truly sinless life before God through sheer will, leading to a theological conception known as *pelagianism*.[24] Wesley did not reject the traditional doctrine of original sin. He believed that humanity was mired in sin before an all-holy God, but that the individual was at least capable of choosing their salvation or denying the salvific gospel of Jesus through the doctrine of prevenient grace, described as a "grace for all" doctrine. Wesley argued that all humanity could choose or reject the message of the Christian God.[25] This ran contrary to the dominant Calvinist doctrines of predestination, divine election, and irresistible grace, which contended that the individual's salvation was dependent on the predetermination of God.[26]

The most pertinent aspect of Wesley's thought in the development of Pentecostalism was the concept of the '*second blessing*' or entire sanctification. Traditional Protestant Christian teaching places a great deal of weight upon two theological concepts, justification and sanctification. The two doctrines are often tied together and in some theological traditions only nuances separate them, the two having a nearly symbiotic relationship. In much of Christian thought, justification refers to the necessity of humanity to make restitution to God as judge. The *Evangelical Dictionary*

[24] J.N.D Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 357-361.

[25] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 438-439.

[26] Cornelis P. Venema, "Predestination," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 405-406.

of Theology describes the act of justifying "is to pronounce, accept, and treat as just, i.e., as, on the one hand, not penally liable, and on the other, entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law."[27] In the traditional Christian experience, this is related to the biblical works of Christ, with the most common references being made to the Christian view of his crucifixion as atonement for the Christian's inherent state of separation from God due to *original sin.* Christ's death and resurrection were the justifying actions for humanity, transforming the believer from a state of sinful unworthiness to one of acceptance before God. Sanctification refers to the Christian's ability to live and act in accordance to the will of God.

John Wesley was not an intentional theological innovator. He read and was influenced by a number of mystical thinkers, prompting him to move away from the dominant Augustinian understanding, which permeated Protestantism since the Reformation. Rather, Roman Catholic mystics, such as Thomas à Kempis and Blaise Pascal, inspired Wesley. Through their works, Wesley became convinced of the necessity of spiritual disciplines in the Christian life and sought to free them from the monastery. Wesley found his greatest source of inspiration in the Anglican mystic William Law (1686-1761), who was influenced by Lutheran mystic Jakob Bohme (1575-1624).[28]

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[27] J.I. Packer, "Justification," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 593.

[28] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 3.

Through the writings of Law, Wesley adopted the doctrine of Christian perfection and developed the concept of the entire sanctification or the "second blessing", thoroughly dividing the theological precepts of justification and sanctification. For the majority of Protestant denominations and theologies, justification and sanctification came through the work of Christ and occurred at the moment of conversion through faith. For Wesley, this was not an accurate reflection of the Christian experience. His doctrine of entire sanctification separated the two doctrinal issues. While maintaining a classical Protestant view of justification, he did not believe sanctification occurred in direct relation to justification. Instead, he understood that sanctification was a second act or blessing, and it marked a "freedom from all known sin."[29] Sanctification seemed distant to Wesley. He was not holy. Believing that the sanctified Christian was cleansed of the inability of overcoming willful sins, Wesley did not see himself as sanctified, viewing himself as bound to sinful behavior.[30] This became the most distinctive doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism and later the Holiness movement; compelling the faithful to respond to God by striving for holiness and a Christian perfection, a life separated from willful sin.[31]

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[29] Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 181.

[30] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 6.

[31] John Wesley did not believe in the possibility of a perfect person though. For Wesley it was impossible to remove the natural flaws of humanity. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 6. Not all Methodist abandoned Calvinist doctrines, such the famous George Whitefield.

John Wesley's successor, John Fletcher, expanded upon entire sanctification. Fletcher contended that the second blessing was a "baptism of the Holy Ghost" or a moment of "receiving the Holy Ghost." Wesley disagreed with Fletcher, arguing that the believer received the Holy Spirit at the point of justification. The two sides came to an amicable resolution without their disagreement ever creating a significant division, with Wesley remaining in a close advisory role throughout Fletcher's life. However, it was Fletcher's perspective that came to prominence throughout the nineteenth century.[32]

According to Donald Dayton, John Fletcher's theology moved aspects of Methodism away from Wesley's "Christcentric" and soteriological focus, shifting it toward a pneumatological and eschatological emphasis.[33] Fletcher's view breaks away from Wesley's primarily due to Fletcher's understanding of spiritual time. Traditional Protestant theology divides time into two categories called covenants, defined by their belief in how God related to humanity; the covenant of the mosaic laws and the covenant ushered in by Christ. Fletcher followed a trend that began to grow throughout the nineteenth century and saw time as broken up into three dispensations anchored by the members of the Trinity. The original dispensation was the dispensation of the Father, which looked toward the arrival of Christ. The second was the dispensation of the Son

[32] Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 48-50.

[33] Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 52. Soteriology is the theology of salvation, pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit, and eschatology is the theology of last things or the end times.

pointing toward the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For Fletcher, the Christian day of Pentecost, recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts, marks the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The third dispensation awaits the return of Christ or the eschaton.[34]

Methodism, with Fletcher's understanding, came to the British colonies in 1766 with the arrival of Thomas Webb, whose opening sermon stated:

> The words of the text were written by the Apostles after the act of justification had passed on them. But you see, my friends, this was not enough for them. They must receive the Holy Ghost after this. So must you. You must be sanctified. But you are not. You are only Christians in part. You have not received the Holy Ghost. I know it. I can feel your spirits hanging about me like so much dead flesh.[35]

From the leadership of Francis Asbury, the Methodist Church grew with the American colonies and eventually the nation. Methodist ministers followed traditional paths for religious growth, going into established and populated areas in an attempt to convert non-believers and sway practicing Christians to their new message of the second blessing. However, Methodists also adopted a model referred to as circuit riders, preachers who left the confines of established society and went into the rural communities and the untamed frontier outposts to deliver their message.[36]

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[34] Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 51.

[35] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 8.

[36] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 9-10.

Following the Revolutionary War, less than ten percent of American citizens belonged to any church congregation. What Mark Noll refers to as "evangelical mobilization" began at the close of the eighteenth century, as Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist ministers began a new period of revivals sparking the Second Great Awakening.[37] The Methodist revivals at times took on ecstatic qualities, the best example being the revivals held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky for an entire year in 1801. A near ecumenical moment in evangelical comradery, Cane Ridge involved Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterians preachers. The Kentucky revival set the tone for the American camp meetings to come, though the setting was not dissimilar from the atmosphere of the original Great Awakening meetings.[38] At Cane Ridge, the reaction to the message of Christian perfection was met with peculiar responses such as "falling, jerking, barking like dogs, falling into trances, the 'holy laugh,' and 'such wild dances as David performed before the Ark of the Lord.'"[39] While the revivalist flame burned bright for a number of years among Methodist, it eventually calmed, but a new torchbearer rose to national prominence, Charles Finney.

Finney, who came from a strict Calvinist background, adopted the doctrine of entire sanctification by the 1830s, adopting a language similar to that of Fletcher and

[37] Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 166-167.

[38] Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 167.

[39] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 12.

foreshadowing the coming Pentecostal movement. Finney claimed "he experienced…a vivid 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'" and added that he was overcome with an unspeakable language (perhaps an antecedent to glossolalia).[40] For Finney, this spiritual baptism allowed the believer to enter into the sanctified life.[41] Finney's ministry emphasized Wesleyan sanctification, while also encouraging the participation of women and African Americans. A strong social consciousness, such as actively campaigning against slavery among other societal ills of his time, imbued Finney's Christianity. The movement became one on the fringes of society. Located in Oberlin, Ohio, it was socially rebellious, and became Christianity at the margins.[42] Other popular perfectionist ministers rose to prominence, including women, most famously, Phoebe Palmer.[43] The rise of women pastors became a hallmark of both the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, which is an important distinction between these ecstatic movements and the traditional evangelical denominations that still eschew women leadership in most forms.[44]

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[40] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 14.

[41] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 14-15.

[42] Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in the New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 96-8.

[43] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 74.

[44] Pentecostalism never establishes an egalitarian society regarding gender roles, but it does offer increased opportunity for women among traditionally conservative denominations.

Finney and the Oberlin movement were at the forefront of a larger religious shift toward the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification.[45] The Holiness Movement, while driven by Methodists, began to overtake the parent church in stature.[46] Leaders such as Phoebe Palmer stressed the need for sanctification of the people, encouraging and promoting women to strive for Christian Perfection. Endowed with the same sense of cultural awareness as Charles Finney, the Holiness doctrines began to transition from the pulpit into all of life, as social reform societies rose to prominence throughout the urban centers of the nation.[47] Theologically, Holiness leaders placed an emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, furthering the pneumatological focus of nineteenth-century evangelicalism.[48] Robert M. Anderson wrote:

> By midcentury, the bulk of American Protestants had come to share a common ideology. Mined from various veins of the common lode of Christian tradition, forged in the Second Great Awakening, and hammered out in the intermittent revivals down to 1858, evangelical Protestantism was Arminian in doctrine, revivalistic in method, and perfectionist in purpose; and perfectionism meant the regeneration both of the individual and of society.[49]

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[45] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 18-9.

[46] Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh E. Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 281.

[47] Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 181-5

[48] Noll, *The Old Religion in the New World*, 99.

[49] Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 29.

Like much of the nation, the Holiness movement became ensnared by the slavery controversy embroiling the country. Vinson Synan notes that while the North was undergoing intense and widespread revivals, especially in 1858, all driven by the doctrine of Christian perfectionism, the South remained untouched. Synan wrote that this was due to southern Wesleyans abandoning the focus on Holiness doctrine and rather placing emphasis on the defense of slavery. Synan even states "that perfectionism was barely discernible…in a volume representing the best thoughts of the church [the southern Methodist Episcopal Church] in 1858, only one out of eighteen…was Wesleyan in regard to sanctification. In the southern church holiness had become a dead letter."[50] As with the rest of the United States, whether political, familial, or religious, the Methodist congregations spilt along northern and southern lines.

As with much of American life, momentum halted due to the Civil War, as a cultural and intellectual paralysis gripped the nation in favor of sectarian bloodshed. The world left after the war was new. Ecclesiastically, German higher criticism was gaining theological traction as more ministers came from German led seminaries, Darwinian evolution became a direct challenge to traditional doctrines, the rise of socialism, and the shift of mainline Protestant denominations toward the social gospel all ran contrary to the Methodist mission.[51] While fervor briefly returned to the besieged south, Protestant

[50] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 20.

[51] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 22 and 30.

Christianity in the United States was wounded. Twenty-three percent of pre-Civil War Americans were church members; after the war religious membership did not reach that number for another thirty years.[52]

The rise of the Social Gospel, German liberal theology, and the gradual influence of the scientific method in the fields of biblical criticism alienated the conservative churches.[53] After the Civil War ended and the impact of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* required all ecclesiastical leaders to respond, mainline Protestant denominations, such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopalian, began to embrace liberal theological re-interpretations of the biblical text. The followers and leaders of Holiness churches, however, held to a rigid biblical literalism. The new theological innovations coming from elite seminaries only strengthened the resolve of the holiness community that the world was in need of their message.

Aware of the religious lethargy, some Methodist ministers took to curing their denominational ills by creating a meeting for reviving the doctrine of entire sanctification. This group, led by John Inskip, called themselves The National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness (within a year the association dropped 'Christian' from their title). It came together in order to aid their

[52] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 22-23.

[53] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 806.

country in the manifestation of "a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit."[54] The association was successful, holding 52 meetings from 1867 through 1883, the largest occurring in Round Lake, New York in 1874 with 20,000 attendees, including President Ulysses S. Grant.[55] The renewed emphasis on Holiness teaching resonated with the major black Methodist congregations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion, neither of which had fallen away from strong Wesleyan teachings. The new impetus also brought in black Baptist congregations.[56] The National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness was the closest that Holiness groups came to creating a national denominational body, though the association was able to generate a variety of regional institutional structures.[57]

Throughout the decades of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, Methodism was at war with itself. As the country moved beyond the Civil War and failed reconstruction

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[54] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 24-26 and Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 378.

[55] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 26.

[56] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 28. Richard Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787 and James Varick established the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion in 1821. Both churches were doctrinally rooted in Wesleyan thought and were natural allies to the burgeoning Holiness movement. It is important to note the attractiveness of Holiness thought to African-American congregations, as several key figures of Pentecostalism came from these traditions.

[57] Edwin S. Gaustad notes that the "[National Camp Meeting Association]…had too much vitality and lively spirit to be contained by a single ecclesiastical body." Further he points out the creation of the Church of God (Anderson, IN), Christian Missionary Alliance, Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, the Pilgrim Holiness Church, and the Church of God in Christ (the COGIC eventually became a leading Pentecostal denomination under the leading of founder Charles H. Mason.) (Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 282).

attempts, the era of massive corporations began. Holiness advocates sought to emphasize the doctrine of entire sanctification and to rid the church of modern amusements, encroachments of popular culture, and the liturgical aesthetics of traditional high churches. The leadership of the Methodist denominations fought back, often condemning the concept of the second blessing as a whole and questioning John Wesley's adherence to the doctrine. By the 1890s, tensions ran high between the low paid working class and the growing monoliths of rail, steel and oil that dominated the American marketplace. As the United States moved into a new era, the Methodist churches abandoned Holiness thought. This left the Holiness associations to begin the process of organizing into a new Christian sect.[58] In 1893, crisis hit as Europe pulled investments and gold from the United States treasury, wheat prices bottomed out, and citizens made runs on banks in panic. Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan briefly discusses the impact of the crisis in his seminal work, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, positing that the financial panic trigged rural America's move toward holiness doctrines. Synan further elaborates, "it appears that the rise of holiness denominations after 1894 was religious revolt paralleling the political and economic revolt of populism."[59]

[58] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 37-40. Synan's research focuses primarily on the conflict within the Methodist Church, South. Though he does mention that liberal thought was coming out the northern branch of Methodism, most notably from New England (pages 37-38).

[59] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 42.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century, the Holiness movement began to fracture internally. This was in part due to the increasing emphasis of the Holy Spirit by specific preachers, who began to interpret "the baptism of the Holy Ghost" as a separate event from sanctification. Some even rejected the possibility of entire sanctification. The impact of Holiness teaching and the novel theologies stemming from rouge voices expanded the reach of the movement. Synan notes that the global scope of the Holiness association influenced doctrines in England, especially the Vicar of Keswick, Canon Harsford-Battersby, sparking the Keswick Revival and what Synan refers to as "the British equivalent of the American National Holiness Association."[60]

While much debate wages over the rightful founder of Pentecostalism, the most widely accepted answer is Charles Fox Parham. The third son of William M. Parham and the former Ann Maria Eckel was born in Iowa in 1873. His family moved to Kansas when he was five. Parham's youth was filled with illness, from infancy through early adulthood. This prevented Parham from performing the traditional chores of male farm children in the late nineteenth century, working more in the domestic sphere with his mother. While Parham was not raised in a devoutly religious home, he noted that his mother instilled in him a "godly devotion."[61] During a bout of rheumatic fever, Parham

[60] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 33.

[61] James R. Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 23-5.

believed he was destined to become a minister and carried the bible with him everywhere, even ministering to the family's cows. At twelve, his mother died during labor and he experienced his official conversion soon afterwards, stating that "a light above the brightness of the sun; like a stroke of lightning it penetrated, thrilling every tissue and fibre…"[62] As Parham grew older, he doubted his convictions to a life of ministry made as a young child, but in 1893 he was ordained in the northern Methodist Episcopal Church and sent to a small church in Eudora, Kansas.[63]

Influenced by Frank W. Sandford, an eccentric figure based out of Shiloh, Maine, Charles Parham opened a Bible school in Topeka to seek after the gift of speaking in tongues.[64] On January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman became the first member of Parham's group to be "baptized in the Holy Spirit."[65] Gradually, Parham and his followers experienced the gift. Parham worked the next several years to spread his message throughout Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas.[66] Parham and his group understood the gift they received to be *xenolalia*. This concept regarded the phenomenon as being able to speak in an unlearned existing human language for the sake of missions.

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[62] Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest*, 26.

[63] Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest*, 28 and 30.

[64] Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest*, 57.

[65] R.G. Robins, *Pentecostalism in America* (Denver: Praeger, 2010), 23.

[66] Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 43.

In Texas, Parham made his most important contribution to the burgeoning movement. He converted William J. Seymour, the son of the two ex-slaves who began to attend Parham's bible classes in Houston. After converting to Parham's theology, he took the message of baptism in the Holy Spirit to the black community of Houston. Soon, a message came from Los Angeles for Seymour, requesting that he become the minister of a small African-American holiness congregation. Despite Parham's protests, Seymour took the opportunity to spread the message of the Holy Spirit's baptism. However, the new congregation did not take quickly to Seymour's message and eventually locked him out of the church. The minister persevered, opening up a home church that grew large enough for a building of its own. Seymour's congregation purchased an old mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles.

Some 140 years after Thomas Webb's sermon, William J. Seymour stood before crowds outside his mission in Los Angeles exhorting his audience to receive the Holy Spirit. Under the guidance of Seymour, a revival broke out on Azusa Street and continued for years. People flocked to Los Angeles to experience the outpouring of the spirit of God. Just as in the revivals that permeate throughout American history, worshippers shook, quaked, screamed, danced, and trembled. Episodes of glossolalia are scattered throughout the history of Christianity, but not until Seymour's Azusa Street mission does it coalesce into a unifying theological language codified by preexisting denominational bodies.

From every region of the nation, church leaders or evangelists returned from Azusa with a new message. The ministers and leaders who attended the meetings in Los Angeles sought to teach their own congregations the new doctrine of the Holy Spirit baptism. The doctrine of speaking in tongues grew throughout the nation, with the aid of smaller, short-term revivals, increasing the need for new churches as the amount of followers expanded.

Despite the impact of Seymour, the movement lacked a singular figure head. Without a recognized hierarchy in place, smaller regional denominations filled the structural void. The subsequent outbreak of sporadic revival meetings throughout America produced a variety of Pentecostal incarnations, most notably the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal-Holiness Church, the Church of God in Christ, and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee).[67]

As the importance of Parham faded, Seymour's contribution to the development of Pentecostalism cooled rapidly as well. So, who was the founder of the sweeping Holy Ghost religion? Some members of the movement believed the Holy Spirit was the founder, creating sporadic global out pouring of his gifts to usher in the final days before

[67]Church of God in Christ is the largest predominately African American branch of Pentecostalism. Many churches in the United States have fancied themselves the Church of God (with the majority of them stemming from the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition); however, to legally distinguish themselves they had to adopt appendages to their title. The largest of these being the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) using the location of their headquarters in their title. Prior to the Cleveland, TN group, there was the Holiness body, Church of God (Anderson, IN). Later, A.J. Tomlinson and his family began several Church of God bodies throughout North Carolina, Alabama, and briefly in New York.

the rapture. This proved a comforting view to some within Pentecostalism, but was less convincing to those outside of it walls.

Given that neither Parham nor Seymour create any meaningful unified body or significant institution for their teachings to formulate, grow, and disseminate their message, the impact of their unique doctrinal innovations deserves considerable weight in any deliberation over who is Pentecostalism's founder. Synan, Blumhofer, and Goff all contend that Pentecostalism is built on Parham teachings. They point to the experiences in Topeka, and the active pursuit of speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism, as the movement's origin. Other scholars, primarily Douglas Nelson and recently Gaston Espinosa, have pushed the narrative of William J. Seymour as the father of Pentecostalism. Nelson contends that it was speaking in tongues and racial unity that made Pentecostalism distinct. However, racial equality was short lived and probably never widely accepted among the whites at the Azusa street mission. Espinosa places more emphasis on the evolution from Parham's missionary focused *xenolalia* to Seymour's *glossolalia*. For Espinosa, it is the development of *glossolalia* at Azusa, under the leadership of Seymour, which marks the beginning of Pentecostalism.[68]

For the purposes of this work, William J. Seymour is the movement's theological founder. While it is from Parham that the gift of tongues is directly pursued as the

[68] Gaston Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 7-20.

baptism in the Spirit, nearly all Pentecostals define tongues as *glossolalia* and not Parham's *xenolalia*. Parham's visit to Azusa shows how he rejected Seymour's innovation upon his missionary focused doctrine. Pentecostalism is built upon the experience at Seymour's Azusa Street Mission, not Parham's Topeka experience and subsequent evangelistic career. In light of the plethora of new religious sects that appeared throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Pentecostalism seems to have benefited by not being bound to an explicit individual founder. The lack of strong leadership from either Parham or Seymour allowed churches and institutions open to the phenomena of speaking in tongues to absorb, translate, and adopt the new doctrine in ways that fit the unique realities and culture of their organizations. This allowed Pentecostal theology the fluidity to expand throughout the global religious marketplace, finding itself at home, not just in early statehood Oklahoma, but also now in locales such as Chile, Korea, Ghana, to name a few.[69]

[69] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 73, 82, and 115.

CHAPTER II

Institutional Development

This chapter focuses on the development of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma. From its origins as the Fire Baptized Holiness Association, an eccentric but successful branch of the late nineteenth-century Holiness movement, into a zealous bastion of the new Pentecostal phenomena over the first three decades of the twentieth century. From its formal establishment in 1909 through to 1930, the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma evolved from a maverick, loosely organized sectarian group into a well-defined institution, with salaried administrators and professional clergy. The story begins by looking back to the religious foundations of the Twin Territories, where Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic missions were established among Native American tribes

Missionaries arrived in what are now the geographical boundaries of Oklahoma sometime around the turn of the nineteenth century. The first were probably French Roman Catholic fur trappers among the Osage tribe, followed by Moravian missionaries, and the United Foreign Mission Society (a Presbyterian-Dutch Reformed joint commission) by 1822.[1] The nineteenth century was a chaotic time for religious

[1] Sidney Henry Babcock and John Y. Bryce, *History of Methodism in Oklahoma: Story of the Indian Mission Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Volume 1* (Oklahoma City: 1937),

establishment in the territories as the Civil War brought widespread turmoil to the tribes and the denominations themselves. They did, however, enjoy the support of the government, with Presidents including Ulysses S. Grant who saw "evangelism as a…solution to the 'Indian problem.'"[2] Additionally, the consistent population influx leading up to statehood taxed the resources of the mainline denominations.[3]According to Edward Guastad magisterial *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America,* there were no Baptist churches in the territories in 1890, though Baptist did make up nearly seven percent of the population. Roman Catholics accounted for over a quarter of the population and Methodists over half of the Twin Territories. Relying upon the eleventh census from 1890, fifty-one Methodist congregations to thirteen Roman Catholic and nine Disciples of Christ assemblies were established in the territories.[4] While these numbers may not be congruent with denominational documentation, they illustrate the significant Wesleyan background of the settlers as the Pentecostal revival began.

22 and Alvin O. Turner, "Religion," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (January 29, 2018).

[2] Jordan H. Glenn, "Joseph Samuel Murrow: The Man and His Times" (PhD diss. The University of Oklahoma, 1982), 96.

[3] Alvin O. Turner, "Religion," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (January 29, 2018).

[4] Edwin Scott Gaustad and Philip L. Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 380 and 401.

Dating back to the genocidal death march of the Five Tribes under the order of President Andrew Jackson, the Baptist missionary Duncan O'Bryan established a rapport with Cherokees in the earliest days of Indian Territory.[5] The pro-removal missionary Issac McCoy founded the first Baptist Church within the Muskogee Nation in 1832 at Ebenezer Station, located somewhere north of the Arkansas river.[6] By 1906, at the dawn of the Pentecostal movement, Baptist were just shy of 70,000 in number within the soon-to-be state, making up ten percent of that total population at statehood. Over seventy-two percent of those belonged to the Southern Baptist convention.[7]

The Methodist Episcopal Church had a long history of working among the tribes of the American southeast, beginning in 1820 among members of the Tennessee Conference. Methodist missionaries arrived in the 1820s. They established the Indian Mission in 1844 and became a strong force in the region through the usage of Native American ministers.[8] The opening of land in the territory to Euro-Americans shifted the Methodist mission to include more provisions of white congregations. From 1844 to 1894, the church reported "a growth of not more than 1,000 Indian members" but "a

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[5] Robert L. Ross, *The Two Became One: The Story of Oklahoma Southern Baptists* (Union City, TN: Master Design, 2005), 3.

[6] J.M. Gaskin, *Baptist Milestones in Oklahoma* (Good Printing Company, 1966), 11 and 21 and Babcock and Bryce, *History of Methodism in Oklahoma*, 14.

[7] Gaskin, 22 and Alvin O. Turner, "Religion," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (January 29, 2018).

[8] Tash Smith, "The Indian Roots of Oklahoma's Methodism: "We May Not Be The Same In Color, But We Are The Same In Heart"", *Methodist History* 50:2 January 2012, 69-70.

growth of more than 13,000 white members." [9] Religion was growing in the two territories and Pentecostals came with a new twist on the old message, filled with exuberance and the phenomenon of *glossolalia*. Pentecostals in Oklahoma were met with constant rebuffs, but their numbers grew steadily, moving from an adolescent sect to a structured and vibrant branch of Protestantism by the 1930s.

When examining the story of Pentecostalism in Oklahoma (or the Great Plains region in general) one can begin from many different starting lines. For the development and establishment of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, a valid origin point is the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church under the leadership Benjamin H. Irwin. Born in Missouri in 1854 and raised in Nebraska through 1860s, Irwin came from a long line of Baptist ministers. Raised in a strict Primitive Baptist family, Irwin's belief that he was "wicked and deceitful above all things" led him to embrace a secular life. Perhaps through a growing internal guilt over his divergence from childhood beliefs, Irwin developed an alcohol habit and abusive behavior toward his wife and children. In 1879, he entered his uncle's Primitive Baptist congregation and returned to Baptist practices (Primitive Baptists were a strict, anti-missionary, Calvinistic Baptist branch dating themselves to the New Testament era). According to reports, Irwin made personal and financial restitution to all those he had lied to, abused, or cheated.

[9] Babcock and Bryce, *History of Methodism in Oklahoma*, 247 and 264.

Breaking away from a fledging law career, Irwin achieved ordination in 1889 in a Missionary Baptist Church, signifying that Irwin left the Calvinist doctrine of his family.[10] He adopted holiness doctrines of entire sanctification in the spring of 1891, aligning himself with conservative Methodism. During his time as a Methodist evangelist, Irwin held meetings throughout the northern territories in Mulhall, outside of Enid, and westward into Woodward, a town filled with "fourteen saloons, about one hundred prostitutes, and gamblers and libertines and all other classes of sinners."[11] He traveled as far south as the Wichita Mountains to preach the second blessing, stating that it was a "land of horned toads, centipedes, campbellities, tarantulas…outlaws…murderous 'white caps,' and backslidden Baptists."[12] Irwin traversed the central plains tirelessly, intertwining himself with the Holiness Associations throughout the region. He moved away from the institutional structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1896 and joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which belonged to the Iowa Holiness Association (the Wesleyan Methodist Church split from the M.E. Church in 1844 over slavery, believing the peculiar institution was not appropriate for the sanctified).[13]

[1010] Vinson Synan and Daniel Woods, *Fire-Baptized: The Many Lives and Works of Benjamin Hardin Irwin, A Biography and a Reader*, (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2017), 5-10.

[11] Synan and Wood, *Fire-Baptized*, 18.

[12] Benjamin Hardin Irwin, "Minco, Indian Territory", 140-141.

[13] Synan and Wood, *Fire-Baptized*, 20.

The transition to the Wesleyan Methodist Church exposed Irwin to more unconventional doctrines, including Keswick holiness thought and the concept of more "blessings" beyond justification and sanctification. During this time, Irwin adopted a belief in divine healing and an evolving doctrine referred to as "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." Irwin was a student of the Christian scriptures, though his methodology seems in line with the skills and rigor of an untrained, zealous layman. Reading of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in holiness literature, Irwin took note of two references to "fire" in his bible (Matthew 3:11 and Revelation 15:2). From this launching point, Irwin searched for this "fire" experience. He did not have to wait long. In Enid, Irwin boarded a train feeling "literally on fire."[14] In the summer of 1896, Irwin held camp meetings to spread his new "fire baptism", some of which were in Woodward, Minco, and Purcell. Irwin emphasized healings and an imminent rapture theology tied to his "fire-baptism" doctrine. Conversely, Holiness Associations viewed the exegetical maverick with suspicion.[15]

As it became clear that Irwin's innovative doctrines were not acceptable among the leaderships of holiness associations, he established "the first local organization of the 'Fire-Baptized Holiness Association'' in Olmitz, Iowa in 1895.[16] With Irwin exerting near universal control, other state associations developed, beginning with Kansas,

[14] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 23, 25-26.

[15] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 30-31.

[16] Joseph E. Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1898-1948: Its Background and History* (Franklin Springs, GA: The Publishing House of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1951), 197.

Oklahoma and Indian Territories, and Texas. The Fire-Baptized Holiness Association in the territories began in Lamont, a small community in Oklahoma Territory, under the oversight of J.H. Henson.[17] The territories became a vital region for the new Association, home to seventeen ordained ministers, second to only South Carolina.[18]

The Fire-Baptized Association also spread out to the east coast and old south, extending through Pennsylvania down into Virginia, the Carolinas, and into Georgia. In Georgia, Joseph Hilary King became a minister of the new sect, the eventual successor of Irwin, and the man who led the Fire-Baptized faithful through a Pentecostal conversion. In South Carolina, Francis Marion Britton converted and became a traveling evangelist for Irwin's church. His tireless zeal played a significant role in the foundation of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma.[19]

By the summer of 1898, the state organizations were in order and ministers spread throughout the country and into Canada. Through this expansion, the need arose to formalize the documents of the church and elect officials. Outside of minor editing, Irwin authored all the major documents of the association and noted that the General Overseer of the Fire-Baptized organization held the appointment for life. All of the Association's leadership unanimously supported him, giving B.H. Irwin lifetime rule over the Fire-

[17] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 197 and Paul, *The Religious Frontier*, 1.

[18] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 58.

[19] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 198.

Baptized community. Joseph Campbell, the astute historian of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, writes, "Since that time it has been difficult to understand, even by those who were present and by their vote adopted such rule, why any intelligent group would have agreed to it."[20] It was during this time that Irwin unveiled his most distinct doctrinal innovations, the fourth and fifth blessings of dynamite and lyddite.

Following other prominent and somewhat eccentric Christian leaders of his age, (such as Mary Bakker Eddy, Ellen G. White, Frank Sandford, and John Alexander Dowie among many others), Irwin exerted his authority and eagerness for theological innovation. As many sect leaders before him, Irwin used the authority granted to him by his followers with a sense of certitude. He assumed the "authority to appoint the presidents, to ordain all preachers, and to dismiss or expel anyone who showed any disposition to ignore or fail to cooperate with polices he dictated."[21] Expanding upon his fire-baptism with an experience of dynamite, he took from *dunamis*, a classical Greek word for power, while rapidly enlarging the amount of spiritually explosive blessings to "lyddite," "oxydite," and "selenite."[22] By 1900, scandal arose in the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association. Reports came in from Omaha of a drunken, cigar smoking Irwin stumbling out of a saloon. Accusations from fellow Holiness ministers, recollections of

[20] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 199.

[21] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 198-9.

[22] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 59-60.

family members, and distinct signs of monetary mismanagement and embezzlement, piled against the minister in rapid succession. Irwin was guilty of financial misdeeds, abuse of alcohol, tobacco usage, and marital infidelity.[23] He resigned from his position in the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association and wholly walked away from the church he had built and overseen with great authority for nearly a decade.[24] He abdicated his role to Joseph H. King.

King rose through the ranks of the maverick holiness association, first as a minister in Georgia, and then was appointed head of the association in Ontario, Canada and later Manitoba. In the spring of 1900, King, at the request of Irwin, moved to Lincoln, Nebraska to take over the editorial duties of the association's periodical, *Live Coals of Fire*.[25] King came from South Carolina, and deemed it and his family an irreligious mess. He was born just four years after the close of the Civil War and raised by a sharecropper in the Reconstruction South. In his autobiography, King saw very little of what he would later see as true Christianity throughout his childhood. King judged his community harshly, saying that:

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[23] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 77-80.

[24] Irwin reappeared as a Pentecostal evangelist, meeting with Parham, Florence Crawford, and Seymour. Irwin abandoned his wife, Anna, in Nebraska, marrying a woman named Mary Jordan in Canada and beginning his new ministry with her. He never divorced his first wife and left his second wife for another woman in 1910. Irwin died in 1926 in Palestine, Texas a minister for the Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestianarian Baptist church, an extreme Calvinist sect. Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 85-93.

[25] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 200-01.

> There were but one or two genuine Christians in all the country, though a few others did live a moral life. Vice, filth, uncleanness, foul language, and gross immoralities abounded. The use of whiskey was universal…All church members drank but one or two exceptions, and some were drunkards…No word was ever heard from the pulpit in condemnation of intoxicants so far as I can recall.[26]

According to King, he left his family home generally uneducated, save a couple years of grammar school and his own private study.[27] When King moved to Georgia, his religious influences altered after witnessing Methodist ministers exhort their audiences to a lifetime pursuit of a holy life. Due to the new experiences gained from Methodist evangelists, King began an extensive study of the Bible, saying he read until he grew weary, reciting the names of biblical figures as he drifted asleep.[28] This absolute sense of moral rightness and studiousness worked together to extensively reorganize the Fire-Baptized sect into the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Following Irwin's abdication, King immediately called a conference to elect a new, full time General Overseer. Unanimously elected after two sessions, the farmer's son from South Carolina assumed the charismatic organization's highest office. King ushered in a new era for the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association. His personality was more conservative and stoic than the emotional and charismatic Irwin. King re-structured

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[26] Joseph Hillery King, *Yet Speaketh: Memoirs of the Late Bishop Joseph H, King* (Franklin Springs, GA: The Publishing House of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1949), 18.

[27] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 26 and King, *Yet Speaketh*, 23.

[28] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 27.

the governance to a more democratic institution, limiting the powers of the General Overseer. He moved the authority of credential ministers to a council and standardized practices for meetings. In 1902, at the bi-annual conference held in Lamont, Oklahoma, the organization adopted a new name, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church. King also quietly removed Irwin's most unconventional doctrines from the official teachings of the church, such as his degrees of fire-baptism: "dynamite, lyddite, and oxodyte."[29] However, the farthest sweeping of King's changes came to the theological extremes evolving from Irwin's merger of his Primitive Baptist heritage and strict Wesleyan Holiness interpretations. King expunged teachings from the church, for example:

> That open public confession of all grades of sin was necessary to evidence genuine repentance; that restitution must be made of the most minute and insignificant things; that the wholly sanctified could not succumb to temptation; that those who were filled with the Spirit needed no one to instruct them; that doctors should be denounced as imposters and their remedies as poisons; that swine meat and other food which condemned as unclean under the Levitical dietary laws should not be eaten; and that neck ties and all other so-called world ornamentation should be not be worn.[30]

During the transition from Irwin to King and his radical re-organization of the administrative and theological branches of the holiness group, most of the churches and congregants left the infant denomination. All that remained in any significant manner were the North Carolina and Georgia conferences.[31] However, King's decision to remove

[29] Campbell *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 204.

[30] Cambpell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 204-5.

[31] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 205.

these sundry items brought from a confusing hybrid of various theological families disarmed barriers for future entry into the church's number. It also protected the church against those willing to take such beliefs, like Irwin's demonization medical professionals, to ill-fated logical extremes.[32] The moral failings of their beloved leader, B.H. Irwin, had all but decimated the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church west of the Mississippi, but under the tutelage of King, the church's revivalists sought to reignite the former passion.

A point of emphasis for the fledging denomination was regainng ground in the west, looking toward Oklahoma and Indian Territories that were previously receptive to their doctrines. For preachers Richard B. Beall and Oscar C. Wilkins, their message of moral purity and God's redemptions from the ways of sin was the only solution to Oklahoma City's illicit issues. They took aim at the city's "Hell's Half-Acre neighborhood," written about in former city manager's Albert McRill's salacious book *And Satan Came Also*. McRill recounts the corruption and lawlessness that befell the city, with stories of a woman named Big Anne who was closely connected politically. McRill refers to her as the "uncrowned Empress of the Deliahs", running houses of prostitution and gambling along "Harlot's Lane."[33] Beall was originally from Kansas and made his

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[32] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 50.

[33] Albert McRill, *And Satan Came Also: An Inside Story of a City's Social and Political History* (Oklahoma City: Britton Publishing Company, 1955), 6 and 29.

way to Oklahoma City as early as 1903, and Wilkins hailed from Indian Territory. Both sought to minister to those they believed were in need of their message.[34] They took out a lease in 1907, on the Blue Front Saloon, establishing a mission in hopes to convert the purveyors of vice in the city and convince their clientele to flee from temptation.[35] Wilkins and Beall took effort to reorganize the space, tearing out the bar, renovating the "gambling hall" into a sanctuary, fitting out the upstairs into living quarters for Wilkins and his family, while using the remaining space for those in need of a temporary place to stay.[36]

In 1905, Harry P. Lott, minister of a holiness congregation before joining the Pentecostal Holiness Church and head of a rescue mission for "fallen girls" in Oklahoma City, held a revival around Billings, which led some in attendance to show the sign of speaking in tongues.[37] Lott took over the Blue Front Saloon Mission in December 1907, residing as the leader there through 1911.[38]

As the mission sought to reach the heathen masses in Oklahoma City, internally the new church relentlessly prayed for the gift of speaking in tongues. Beall, Lott, and

[34] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 64.

[35] *History of the First Church*, 1.

[36] Undated, Unnamed Newspaper Clipping from the First Church Oklahoma City collection at International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives, Bethany, Oklahoma.

[37] "Minister's Wife Restrains Him" *The Daily Oklahoman*, September 29, 1909.

[38] *History of the First Church*, 1.

Wilkins all followed the news coming out of Los Angeles by reading the *Way of Faith* periodical. They yearned for the gift of the Holy Spirit's baptism to touch theirs lives and all of those around them. According to Joseph Campbell, members of the Oklahoma City mission held sessions at their homes to plead to God to touch them with his radical outpouring.[39] Meanwhile, rising leader Joseph H. King visited Snyder, Oklahoma Territory as a part of the concerted effort to re-ignite the Oklahoma branch of the Fire-Baptized community.

In 1907, fresh from the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, Glenn A. Cook arrived in Oklahoma Territory. He preached the new Holy Spirit centered message, visiting former Fire-Baptized groups. Going to Lamont in 1907, the birthplace of the Fire-Baptized Church in Oklahoma, King joined Cook, both preaching the new doctrine of speaking in an unknown spiritual language. The success of this meeting in Lamont led King to make Oklahoma a focus of the church's westward missions.[40]

King reportedly received the gift of tongues in Georgia during a revival led by G.B. Cashwell (a leader in the Pentecostal Holiness Church in North Carolina), who had returned from Azusa Street.[41] King was initially skeptical of the new doctrine. Cashwell

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[39] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 210.

[40] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 66 and Tony G. Moon, *From Plowboy to Pentecostal Bishop: The Life of J.H. King* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2017), 156.

[41] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 209. Citation on Cashwell Founded in blank, Cashwell's Pentecostal Holiness Church was a Wesleyan denomination that was on the early edge of adopting the Pentecostal language and beliefs.

held a great revival in Dunn, North Carolina, colloquially referred to as 'Azusa East.' He received reports from his ministers attending Cashwell's services, stating that they were experiencing for the first time the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Struck with disbelief, King took their words as a rejection of the central doctrine of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and an accusation that its professed "fire-baptism" was lacking in an essential manner; it was not the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." Additionally, the new adherents claimed that the outpouring of glossolalia was the sole proof of one's reception of the baptism of the Holy Ghost in full. It was a grand theological claim that the conservative King found too sweeping to believe.[42] Weary from his days under B.H. Irwin, King approached all new doctrines with deep suspicion. Unlike many of his ministers and an increasing number of his churches' members in North Carolina who were streaming to revivals, King ran to the Bible and his collection of commentaries and Greek lexicons. King debated with his ministers for days on end, feeling he had come out victorious. He argued with Cashwell and felt as though his own views were theologically sound and the new doctrine of tongues as proof of Holy Spirit baptism was heresy. However, after days of study and a particularly grueling individual study session lasting hours, King concluded that he was mistaken. A reading of Henry Alford's nineteenth century text, *The Greek New Testament*, prompted him to review his understanding, not of the famed day of Pentecost, but of Acts chapter 8, when some Samaritan converts began engaging

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[42] Moon, *From Plowboy to Pentecostal Bishop*, 106-7.

in tongues after baptism caused the change. From this point, King came to the conclusion that the *xenolalia* experienced at Pentecost, which adherents such as Charles Parham advocated as the true gift of tongues, was a temporary sign. The permanent gift and proof of the Holy Spirit baptism was the experience of glossolalia. With this conversion, by early 1907, The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church began yet another transitionary period as a member of the burgeoning Pentecostal movement.[43]

Glenn Cook placed a brief national light on the revival that occurred in Lamont, writing effusively for one of the premier early Pentecostal periodicals, *The Apostolic Times*:

> Arrived in Oklahoma…quite a number were tarrying and waiting for Pentecost when I arrived, but much had to be done before God could pour out His spirit. The people had been in much bondage. Eating pork, wearing neckties, drinking coffee, and wearing a moustache were taught to be very sinful, and except you were circumcised to these you were lost. After about ten days of prayer and holding up the Blood, God began to break them up and they began to pardon of one another and their neighbors. And in a short time, in a cottage prayer meeting, God poured out His Spirit in slaying power and nearly all went down, one woman coming through speaking in tongues. God now began to work and souls were saved, backsliders reclaimed, and believers sanctified at nearly every service. The country was stirred for miles around. Some came 100 miles to get Pentecost and healing.[44]

Frank T. Alexander of the Beulah Holiness Bible School and ministers from other holiness churches went against their counterparts after visiting the revival underway in

[43] Moon, *Plowboy,* 109-12 and 154.

[44] G.A. Cook, "Pentecost in Lamont, Okla", *The Apostolic Faith,* (January 1907), 1.

Lamont and spread the experience of *glossolalia* to their parishioners.[45] Tireless evangelist couple, Dan and Dolly York, came to experience the phenomena of tongues at the Beulah school in 1908 and did much to spread the teaching throughout holiness circles in the state.[46] The new experiential doctrine gained traction in Oklahoma, as Lott, Beall, and Wilkins all taught it at their mission in Oklahoma City. The Pentecostal denomination grew rapidly as reinvigorated ministers spread throughout the new state with vigor and enthusiasm.[47]

Paul argues that the traveling evangelist from South Carolina, Francis Marion Britton, "established the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma."[48] A former farmer turned minister, F.M. Britton dedicated himself to the holiness message walking and riding the rail throughout South Carolina on behalf of the Fire-Baptized movement under the leadership of Irwin, before converting to the new Pentecostal doctrine at the Oklahoma City mission.[49] According to Britton, he suffered persecutions along the way, crowded by violent mobs and even held at gunpoint while preaching. A group of angry Oklahomans broke Britton's jaw and in another incident ripped his tent to shreds.[50]

[45] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 67.

[46] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 68.

[47] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 66-7.

[48] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 62.

[49] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 61.

[50] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 62.

Rather than take these as critiques on his ministerial abilities, Britton believed it was due to the convicting nature of his message. Upon Alexander bringing the Pentecostal doctrine to the Beulah group, Britton arrived in 1908 to settle and organize the school. Britton worked with Lott throughout 1909 to establish the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church as a functioning denomination in Oklahoma.[51]

In 1909, under the auspices of Britton, the First Oklahoma Annual Conference of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church convened at Lamont. The attendees were sparse, consisting of nine ministers (including Lott and three women) and the lone Lamont congregation.[52] In 1911, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, established in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1900, which stemmed from a Wesleyan background and adopted the doctrine of speaking in tongues in 1908, merged with the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church. King was in India conducting a mission trip, leaving Britton in charge of representing the Fire-Baptized denomination in the meetings. The delegates selected the North Carolina organization's name to distance the new church from the Fire-Baptized's Irwinian past.[53]

The newly minted Pentecostal Holiness Church began to solidify in Oklahoma by 1911, taking on the foundational elements of a standard denominational body. Following

[51] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 68 and Paul, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, 15.

[52] "The Oklahoma Annual Conference or Convention was Organized at Lamont Okla in the Month of Sept, Year 1909 by F.M. Britton, Ass. Falcon N.C. General Overseer, of the Fire Baptized Holiness" Church, 1.

[53] Moon, *Plowboy*, 191-193.

elections, Lott and Beall ascended to the highest offices, and Britton established himself in Oklahoma as a general evangelist. Rules were also set forth for recognizing preachers. Aspiring ministers had to receive recommendations from their church or the board and examined by the state office.[54] From nine ministers and one church, the burgeoning denomination had eleven evangelists, ten pastors, twenty-one workers, three missionaries, and over twenty congregations.[55]

By the fifth conference in 1913, with Beall replacing Lott as State Superintendent and Wilkins rising to Assistant Superintendent, the denomination began to assert itself as a body protecting itself against errant readings, unapproved teachings, and veiled references to "questions of character." Six workers or ministers in some capacity went before a committee for questioning, with half of them resulting in the church "withdrawing" from them.[56] Included in the number was the female pastor of Hartshorne and Gowen, Annie Ashton, her "character [was] questioned on points of doctrine" and ultimately "the Convention voted not to retain Sister Ashton."[57] In 1913, the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church published official statistics. The conference's priorities in the collection of data show that membership numbers were not

[54] Third Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4-5.

[55] Third Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 5-7.

[56] Fifth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1-5.

[57] Fifth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 3.

its core focus, but rather their message affecting the lives of those hearing it. The fifth conference recognized sixteen churches in Oklahoma, mostly counting congregants through percentages of those sanctified, holding family worship, open to testify in public, amount of those receiving the Holy Spirit baptism, among others. Of the sixteen churches located within Oklahoma (a congregation in Liberty, Arizona was also under the purview of the Oklahoma Conference in 1913), stretching from Osage County to Ardmore and into the western part of the state, ten of the congregations reported a total membership of 231, a growth of ten percent from the previous year according to the 1913 table.[58]

In the early years of the Oklahoma Conference, very few men and no women came under serious consideration for the highest positions of the conference, as all the power in the state rotated primarily among five men: Harry Lott, Oscar Wilkins, R.B. Beall, Dan Evans and S.E. Starks. Sometime in 1917, Lott left the Pentecostal Holiness Church, establishing the Apostolic Faith Church in Oklahoma City, where he remained until his death in 1950.[59]

In 1917, the Conference, which Joseph King attended as the acting General Superintendent of the national body, joined the national movement for prohibition,

[58] Fifth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

[59] "Apostolic Camp Meetings Arranged", *The Daily Oklahoman* July 17, 1931.

establishing a temperance committee headed by Lott and a Mrs. Jesse Campbell.[60] The temperance committee laid out a plea on the second day of the convention stating:

> We your committee on Temperance beg to submit the following: We as a church take a stand against the liquor traffic in every form, as we believe it one of the greatest evils of the age…we also think it proper…to speak to the children on the evils of intemperance….Let us as a church do all that we can for the furthering of the temperance cause.[61]

Unlike other temperance unions, the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness temperance committee was predominately male. While contrary to some national narratives, it fits into the fundamentalist culture of the budding evangelical denomination, influenced by the tee-totaling teachings of John Wesley and reinforced by the purity doctrine of Holiness ministers, male and female, throughout the nineteenth century.[62]

The tenth annual conference at Seminole in 1918 quietly ushered in the second generation of Pentecostal Holiness leadership. Previous to the Conference, King concluded a poorly attended revival at Mountain Park during a stretch of hot and dry weather, common to southwest Oklahoma. He found the 1918 state conference unremarkable, but an important development occurred; Dan T. Muse attained the rank of

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[60] King, *Yet Speaketh*, 306 and Ninth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2.

[61] Ninth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 6.

[62] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 426 and Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 102 and 204 and Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 36 and 66.

licensed minister of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.[63] He was already functioning in the church as a missionary and led a committee on Sunday Schools for the conference. This was an important moment, as Muse became one of the important figures in Oklahoma's second generation of Pentecostalism.[64]

Muse was from Boyd, Texas, the grandchild of a Baptist minister. His maternal grandfather took a great interest in the young Muse and encouraged him to grow up following in his footsteps, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, into his teen years his interest in a ministerial life waned.[65] Muse's first career came at a local newspaper, the *Boyd Index*, where he aided the editor in printing duties. He seemed poised for a career in the paper business. He received his first editorial job over the *Bridgeport Index* (a subsidiary of the *Boyd Index*), eventually gaining employment in Indian Territory, which led him to the Oklahoma Paper Company in Oklahoma City.[66] Muse's childhood dreams never left and by 1913 he returned to his religious upbringing and experienced what he believed was sanctification after "God took the craving away" to smoke tobacco. As he continued his spiritual journey, he came into contact with a Pentecostal Mission and saw a man "talking in tongues" which intrigued the young Muse,

[63] King, *Yet Speaketh*, 312.

[64] Tenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1 and 3.

[65] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 69-70.

[66] Paul, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, 9-10 and Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 70.

who "edged over to his body" as the man made incomprehensible utterances. The next night, Muse stated it was his mission to find the baptism of the Holy Spirit. According to Muse, once he experienced the baptism it took over his ability to verbally communicate for days on end, forcing him to write all of his wishes down on paper since he was unable to speak English. Muse discovered the Oklahoma City mission, joined the church, became the janitor, and filled any role needed for the next four years.[67]

As the church began to settle into its existence post-World War I, a decade into its life, the remaining original firebrands of the movement slid into positions of traditional administrative authority and pastoral duties. Paul points out that during the first wave of evangelistic excitement, the church relied on the abilities of men (and some women, though often relegated to minor roles outside of some low level ministerial work) who came from older denominations or Christian sects. These men received preaching and pastoral training outside of the Pentecostal Holiness movement and were converts to its doctrine. They had picked up the church's message, but it had not informed their methods. Now came the time for the organization to develop its own ministers internally.[68] Neophyte ministers like Dan Muse learned by watching, gaining experience by filling in for veterans when possible, disciplined personal study, and by finding

[67] Paul, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, 22-27
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[68] Paul, "The Religious Frontier", 71.

unexplored areas looking for a minister to lead a revival.[69] To deal with growth, the Conference developed further infrastructure and administrative scaffolding. Four districts were reported for the youthful institution in 1919: Wagoner, Oklahoma City, Emanuel, and Seminole.[70]

Further signs of the Pentecostal Holiness Church's maturation included the development of official materials for leaders and common members alike. The church's publications, which included books by denominational leaders were consistently recommended for reading and mandatorily required in some cases. The church's periodical, *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* was published out of North Carolina and controlled by the denomination's General Superintendent. In 1921, the Oklahoma Conference moved to take under its control, *The Pentecostal Holiness Faith*, a Conference run periodical meant to serve as "the official organ of the church of Oklahoma."[71]

The institutional growth of the church hit a new peak in 1921, when Conference Superintendent, Dan W. Evans, argued for the need of a full-time Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. Evans felt that in order to meet the needs of the state's fifty churches and "to reach fields of the Apostolic or Pentecostal bands within our reach, who

[69] Paul, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, 28-29 and 33.

[70] Eleventh Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

[71] Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12.

would be disposed to be organized in our faith," the denomination required more attention than part-time administration had the ability to give.[72] The motion carried, as the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma progressed further down the path of professionalization. In 1923, the cumbersome realities of growth arose at the state meeting in Seminole, with the first motion to divide the Oklahoma Conference due to the increasing number of member churches. They tabled the motion until 1924, however.[73]

King recalled the 1924 meeting fondly, as Oklahoma was the lone conference holding camp meetings in conjunction with their state conferences. The 1924 Conference, held at a park owned by the Shawnee Railroad Company, was the largest state gathering up to that point. Something akin to a revival broke out on the grounds as a significant number of locals came to hear the preaching.[74] Following the affective evangelizing, the Boundary Committee formed to determine the need for creating a second state administrative body. They elected to divide the administration of the Pentecostal Holiness Church into an Oklahoma Conference and East Oklahoma Conference.[75] They set the geographical outline of membership primarily by railroads, stating,

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[72] Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12.

[73] Fifteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12.

[74] King, *Yet Speaketh*, 318-319.

[75] Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 11-12.

> Beginning with the main line of the Santa Fe from Kansas Line to Newkirk, then the branch line of the Santa Fe by way of Cushing, Shawnee and Pauls Valley, then main line into Texas. With Payson and Ardmore churches to the West and Davis to the east.[76]

This marked the boundary line east of Stillwater to the north, shifting westward following the present-day I-35 corridor to the south from Pauls Valley to Texas. After nurturing churches outside of the state, some as far away as Arizona, the Oklahoma Conference further divided along bordering state lines with the founding of the Texas Conference in 1925, the Kansas Conference in 1926, and the Arkansas Conference in 1928.[77]

At the same time, some of the earliest leaders of the church began to move away from executive positions. The controversial Harry P. Lott established his own congregation outside of the Pentecostal Holiness Church. Oscar C. Wilkins never achieved State Superintendent, but does not seem to have aspired to higher administrative status. Although occasionally nominated for high office, he quickly withdrew from consideration.[78] Wilkins took his zealous spirit everywhere, including state conferences. In 1920, as hosts of ministers' reports were made and the members' characters reviewed, Wilkins openly objected to the conference's decision regarding an evangelist named A.D. Rice. He argued that Rice was guilty of "imprudent behavior" sending the issue to the

[76] Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 10.

[77] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, Back Cover.

[78] Fourteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 11.

Judiciary Committee, which acquitted the minister.[79] Wilkins was a constant presence at the Oklahoma Conference, even when he left Oklahoma to establish a congregation in California or traveled nearly 20,000 miles throughout the United States, baptizing people in the Mississippi River.[80]

R.B. Beall occasionally reappeared as a committee member and continued to pastor. He briefly transferred to the Florida Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in the mid-1920s. However, he returned to Oklahoma amid some controversy, offering "some explanation…and…apologized to the Conference" regarding an incident with an Earl Short in the Sunshine State. The details of the matter were left unrecorded.[81] Beall was in a difficult situation again in 1930, brought before the board regarding his new ministry in Carnegie, having been brought before the Official Board prior to the convening of the Conference over potential negligence of duties.[82] S.E. Stark was the first of a new generation of leaders, followed by men such as Dan T. Muse, who were largely unchurched in their adult lives until association with the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

[79] Twelfth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 6 and 10.

[80] Twenty-Third Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 7.

[81] Twentieth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 10.

[82] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 10.

Life for the State Superintendent was a busy one. A glimpse is given during standing Superintendent S.E. Stark's report for the year of 1928, saying, "he had preached 228 times and visited every church but one."[83] He followed it with a busier year in 1929, preaching 260 times and traveling nearly 13,000 miles.[84] In the twenty-first conference, the minister's reports gave some light regarding their workload and evangelistic achievements. Like athletes listing off statistics, ministers rolled out their resumes. As Dan T. Muse, the Texas native, summarized the quantitative realities of a tireless preacher:

> Preached 156 times, conducted and assisted in 41 funerals, performed 20 marriages, baptized some in water, prayed for in person 2,945 sick or afflicted people, including about 762 in homes and hospitals. Made 249 pastoral calls, and prayed in 31 unsaved homes, with a result of 19 saved, two sanctified and two received the baptism of the Holy Ghost in private homes. Traveled about 25,000 miles in the Gospel work.[85]

Others preached 100 times, others 50 or 60 times. A few recalled revivals they held, and one went to "the Holy Land." The veteran of the denomination, Oscar Wilkins, left his church in Enid because he "felt the call" to found the first Pentecostal Holiness Church in Los Angeles, which became a member of the Oklahoma Conference the same year. [86] J.A. Campbell, a veteran pastor in the Oklahoma Conference, also felt the missionary

[83] Twentieth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 8.

[84] Twenty-First Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 8-9.

[85] Twenty-First Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

[86] Twenty-First Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9-13.

zeal toward the American West. He built, as he claimed "the only mission in…Denver, Colo., that stands for sanctification as a second work of grace, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost."[87] Charles J. Phipps, pastor of the Oklahoma City Second Church, passed a requirement, due to a prevailing sense of underperformance among evangelists, that the ordained itinerants "hold two revivals or preach fifty times….during the Conference year" and those under licensure were held to twenty-five sermons or a single revival.[88] The mandate received further definition the following year when the conference added punishments to enforce the ministerial standard. The failure to meet the duties as assigned resulted in the loss of ordination and license.[89]

Some Pentecostal denominations exercised less oversight over its members than many mainline institutions, partially due to their young age and the need to build infrastructure. The nature of emphasizing a lay pastorate also played a role.[90] However, the Pentecostal Holiness Church still saw policing its ministers as a vital part of its duties, judging preachers on "inefficiencies, neglect of duties, immoral conduct or preaching false doctrine."[91] The committees routed out heretics, such as Mrs. E.C. Evans who was

[87] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 16.

[88] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 14.

[89] Twenty-Third Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 16.

[90] Paul, *From Printer's Devil to Bishop*, 33.

[91] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

found guilty of apostasy and J.A. D. Collins, so accused of false teachings that they revoked his ordination.[92]

As the church grew through a lay pastorate, whose clerical life was often a second career, it had trouble attending to their rural congregants. Committees handed down rebukes and warnings throughout the ninth convention. One minister, R.M. McCrudy, was publically remonstrated for "unfaithfulness" and threatened that if he was not "more faithful," the convention "would not tolerate it any longer." The vague charges seemed to find clarity in the similarly phrased reprimand of Cleburn Messer, whose accusation of faithlessness relates directly to his ministerial duties. The Conference dropped Messer from rolls the following year for his continued "failure to perform his ministerial duties".[93] The Conference censured another minister, O.M. Millsap, for "his failure to see to certain congregations."[94] Later pastor L.G. Chilcoat of Hill Top, W.D. York of Seminole (York and Chilcoat were a ministerial team in Indian Territory during their holiness days, holding revivals in Wolf, amongst the Seminole people)[95], and J.G. Bond of Iona were found in "neglect of duties."[96] Some did make amends and achieved

[92] Tenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2 and Twenty-First Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 13.

[93] Tenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2.

[94] Ninth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 3-4.

[95] Daniel W. York and Dollie York, *Life Events of Dan and Dollie York* (Oklahoma City: Charles Edwin Jones, 2002), 6.

[96] Eleventh Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4

restoration with the Conference. An E.G. Murr found both accusation and forgiveness at the same conference. However, the seemingly mischievous Mr. Murr managed to find himself under investigation at three consecutive conferences. In 1924, he was acquitted during the second afternoon session, only to be re-investigated by a new tribunal which found Murr guilty of imprudence and "dropped" him from the Conference.[97] Cleburn Messer worked toward restitution, receiving ordination in 1920, three years after his dismissal. Messer went on to pastor Pentecostal Holiness churches in eastern Oklahoma, such as Blanco, throughout the decade.[98] Luther G. Chilcoat kept his pastoral duties, becoming a dedicated minister for the denomination, serving for years and often assuming the pastorate in multiple small, rural locales. Eventually, Chilcoat found himself as a member of the Judiciary Committee and owner of "The Chilcoat Hospital". There, a worn and sickly Joseph King recuperated in August of 1928, with Chilcoat attending to his physical health and providing him an "open-air living space...soothing his tired muscles…[and] 'torn nerves'"[99] Further, the ninth convention supported the

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[97] Fifteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12 and Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 8 and 10 and Fourteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

[98] Twelfth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 15 and Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 28

[99] Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 6.

education of its pastorate through recommended books and bible programs; however, it also faced challenges on that front as well.

The committee of education detected a general lack of enthusiasm for their learning program and urged the Conference "to require ordained preachers, within a year to come up to the requirements…regarding reading the Bible and Pentecostal literature."[100] For years, the Conference's Education Committee recommended a mandatory vocational training program for their pastorate. In 1919, the committee pushed further asking for a structured study devised by their chairman for each preacher and all members of the conference.[101] Ultimately, some ministers were unable or unwilling to meet the demands of the rural, small church ministry. Still others lacked the emotional fire the church deemed necessary, such as Claude Adkins, whose report passed with the remonstrative "to be more zealous in the future."[102] In-fighting broke out among others, as congregants at the Washington church were brought before the Judiciary Committee requiring the church "to rescind their action of retaining" a member until "he has repented in a Bible way" lest the congregation as a whole lose membership with the

[100] Ninth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 6 and King, *Yet Speaketh*, 335 and Moon, *Plowboy*, 390.

[101] Eleventh Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 7

[102] Tenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2.

Pentecostal Holiness denomination.[103] E.L. Newby "was found out of harmony with the discipline of the Pentecostal Holiness Church."[104]

The Judiciary Committee functioned as its name might suggest, addressing disputes regarding official church business, teaching, and the standing of individual members, ministers, or congregations. Some ministers failed moral examinations. The Conference, for example, removed W.M. Hamilton for "using tobacco and breaking the Sabbath" and accused the married ministerial team of Lon and M.M. Wilson, of "attending shows and vaudevilles." Wilsons' punishment was to cease involvement in bawdy entertainment and to attend church on a consistent basis "unless hindered by sickness or bad weather."[105] The Committee on Public Morals of the East Oklahoma Conference warned ministers "that they abstain from traveling with members of the opposite sex, except for relatives" and denounced to their church members, the "modern evils…of moving picture shows, mixed swimming pools, worldly music, immodest dress, and desecration of the Sabbath."[106] These condemnations were in line with the greater fundamentalist and holiness inspired churches of the day. Conservative churches, weary

[103] Eleventh Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4 and 6.

[104] Fourteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

[105] Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 9.

[106] Seventh Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 7.

of worldly ways, had long looked down upon tobacco usage and generally saw most modern entertainment as crass and unbecoming of a holy Christian life.

Part of the growing urge to educate the church's ministerial base included an increasing focus on the denomination's and Conference's increasing production of literature. Books by national leaders and evangelists became the recommended reading (and a mandatory requirement in some instances) of Pentecostal Holiness ministers in Oklahoma. The most often marketed piece of writing were the church's periodicals, *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, published out of North Carolina and controlled by the denomination's General Superintendent, as well as *The Pentecostal Holiness Faith*, which the Oklahoma Conference moved, in 1921, to take under its control, as "the official organ of the church of Oklahoma."[107]

In 1920, the denomination, under the auspices of Muse, unrolled its first systematically organized education plan delineated by one's standing within the Oklahoma Conference. There were three ministerial categories a member of the church fell under: workers', licensed preachers', or ordained ministers'. The educational plan was similar for each with the depth and thoroughness adjusted according to one's station. The topics covered included "Historical Old Testament", "New Testament", "Doctrinal", "Practical", and a "Literary Course" focused on increased literacy among the members.

[107] Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12.

Workers received the least comprehensive load with fifteen sections and four texts, including a "sixth grade grammar" book. Licensed preachers had an expanded twenty-seven sections with four texts including a "seventh grade grammar" text. Predictably, the most comprehensive educational course fell on the Conference's ordained clergy, who were expected to study over thirty sections, multiple monographs, and a higher level of grammar.[108] This shows a denomination committed to a foundation of standardized practices, internal institutional organization, and actively communicating its beliefs regarding doctrine, biblical expertise, and general knowledge to its official church organs.

The following year, the church reconfigured the educational system, trimming it down and breaking it up quarterly. The new program dropped mandatory requirements from workers, with the new configuration focusing on monographs and official church texts. The one topical outlier and the only book assigned for both the licensed and ordained throughout the whole calendar was *A Modern English Grammar* by Huber Gray Buehler.[109] The widely popular lesson book was published in thirty editions from 1900-1914 and adopted into similar lesson plans in subsequent years.[110] The reoccurring emphasis on grammar also suggests a concerted effort to improving church members'

[108] Twelfth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 27-33.

[109] Thirteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 11.

[110] "Huber Gray Buehler", WorldCat Identities http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-nr97028473 (accessed March 20, 2018) and Fourteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 8 and Fifteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 11.

written and oral communication skills. This is potentially evidence of a generally uneducated membership with a limited literacy.

As the scope and means of the church expanded within the state, the next logical step for the ever vigilant Education Committee, concerned the construction of brick and mortar learning institutions. The committee consisted of Dan Evans, Dan Muse, and Jessie Campbell, and other influential board members constructed a plan for "a Pentecostal Holiness High School as near the center of the State as practical" to implement "a graded course of study for members of the Conference."[111] It took time, but in 1924, the Conference found land for purchase near Shawnee. In 1925, King's College, named after General Superintendent J.H. King, opened in Checotah and moved to Kingfisher.[112]

With the addition of a new college associated with the church, educational plans turned to the General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, who began to direct ministers to classes at King's College. This illustrates an interesting development. As many evangelical schools were founded throughout the post-World War I era, as fundamentalists receded from view as the Progressive Age ended. Conservative Christian bodies built protected enclaves to shield themselves from a world that rejected their

[111] Twelfth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12-13.

[112] Sixteenth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 10 and Second Annual Session of the East Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 11

message. This outlook emerged in their internal works, calling preachers to see "the danger of modern criticism of the Bible and…the rapid spread of infidelity throughout our nation." The educational program urged ministers of the Pentecostal Holiness Church to adopt "a systemic study the Bible", to be well versed in the church's doctrine, and to go to one of three schools related to the denomination.[113]

Joseph King believed expositional study of Christian scripture to be the highest and most important form of study. In his memoirs, he laments that in 1928 he "held four Bible Conference [sic] in Oklahoma….These lessons were not mere lectures but sermons and expositions…heard almost exclusively by ministers…in the night services laymen attended but not in large numbers." He notes of the common person, that "They appreciate the messages of the fiery evangelists…but when one delivers expositions on truth or discipline…he is completely out of their sight and hearing." Education was close to King's heart in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, with the Oklahoma region playing an important experimental ground. However, King stated, "if a large audience is the criterion…to judge the importance, value and worth of the work done, then I am an utter failure. My work is empty and vain."[114]

[113] Twentieth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 12.

[114] King, *Yet Speaketh*, 327-328.

Joseph King lamented over his life's work, pondering with the author of Ecclesiastes, its value and whether it had all been in vain. The Pentecostal Holiness Church began in the Twin Territories as a radical holiness sect reeling from internal scandal. King oversaw the institution's conversion to the rising Pentecostal movement, rooted in the phenomena of speaking in tongues. Through the 1910s the church sought to establish itself, comprised of rural congregations, with an emphasis on the new teaching of *glossolalia* and planting churches. By 1924, the denomination began to build upon its foundation. Expanding its administrative structures, executing state-wide education plans, building schools, and funding salaried denominational professionals. By the beginning of the 1930s, the Pentecostal Holiness Church was no longer a maverick sectarian movement, challenging the conservative theological norms. It began to entrench its structures and model itself after old world churches. The Pentecostal Holiness denomination never took over Oklahoma. Southern Baptists numbered over 130,000 members, nearly as many Methodists, 60,000 Disciples of Christ, and over 46,000 Catholics as of the 1936 religious census.[115] Nevertheless, from a room of nine people in Lamont, Oklahoma came a denomination nearing 2,500 members as it entered its third decade in the state. This marked a near 1100% increase from 1912. Perhaps most importantly, the work of the Oklahoma Conference gave the denomination a fertile western ground, keeping the church from becoming regionally bound to a North

[115] United State Census Bureau, *United States Census of Religious Bodies, State File, 1936*, https://www.thearda.com (accessed: January 18, 2018).

Carolina-Georgia corridor. Additionally, the group worked and toiled long hours to normalize Pentecostal practice among a hardworking, conservative people, not prone to tolerate experiments and change. Under the leadership of King the denomination grew to a more mature, if struggling, institution, armed with a crew of fiery, tireless local evangelists. Eventually, as it did throughout the nation and globally, Pentecostalism rose in number throughout the state, upon the foundation built by these people. The Pentecostal Holiness Church expanded from 16,754 adherents in 1990 to over 28,000 by the turn of the millennium, with Pentecostals as a whole making up no less than six percent and nearing ten percent of the Oklahoma's population.[116]

[116] "America's Changing Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Group*, 101-102 and Gaustad and Barlow, New Historical Atlas, 384 and Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, Historical Atlas of Oklahoma Atlas, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 225.

CHAPTER III

Pentecostals and Society

Pentecostals grappled with social issues, internal turmoil, and external belligerents in Oklahoma. Throughout the first decade of Pentecostalism, local newspapers ran salacious headlines, labeling any peculiar religious sect "holy rollers," from church groups to proto-cult communes. Traveling evangelists encountered aggressive locals, while cases of adherence to radical doctrines led to public outrage at some "holy roller" sects. The church also dealt with the downfall of leaders, the rise of socialism in Oklahoma, reactions against the First World War, and its own evolving understanding of the role of women in the denominational structure. These issues forced the denomination to wrestle with its place within the culture and its own walls. Eventually, Pentecostalism in Oklahoma developed a more conservative attitude after its original radical impulses. Organizations such as the Pentecostal Holiness Church moved toward a more defined institutional structure and with that came the dampening of outlying political and social views.

In a nation rarely lacking for religious zeal, the Progressive Era saw many traveling evangelists adhering to a variety of new sectarian groups, proclaiming their version of a gospel at the highest volume possible. These itinerant ministers crisscrossed

the countryside preaching on city corners and in any obliging farmer's open field. The Methodist circuit riders became popular and Baptist missionaries were successful. The ministers of the Pentecostal Holiness church took their place within this historical lineage.

Newspapers offer a multitude of reports filled with vague references to holy rollers, displaying how the local media's perceptions of the new evangelists influenced Oklahoman's understanding of religious peoples adhering to the forms of extravagant, boisterous, and, relative to traditional Protestantism, peculiar worship. In an incident reported in the *Oklahoma City Times*, an African-American resident referred to as "Uncle Rasmus" was taken into custody on charges of disturbing the peace, yelling loudly throughout the streets at "half past one in the morning." The defendant claimed it was due to his religious convictions, at which point the judge rejoined "Religion! Are you a Holy Roller or something like that? I have religion Rasmus, but I don't get up at midnight and tell everybody about it."[1] A Guthrie report told of a group of thirty people of some religious persuasion who roamed through the streets of town at five o'clock in the morning. Little description of the group itself is given. The brief article refers to them as a "Band of Fanatics" and the event as the "Holy Rollers Parade."[2] This type of harmless pandering led to adolescent pranking. A retiring Baptist minister preaching his final sermon in Ardmore spoke of releasing a bag full of yellow jackets into the service of holy

[1] Untitled, *Oklahoma City Times*, November 10, 1915.

[2] "Holy Rollers Parade", *The Guthrie Daily Leader,* August 25, 1906.

rollers while "in their trances."[3] However, other ministers experienced more alarming circumstances than a hoard of wasps.

Many veterans of the work spoke of the travails encountered along the way. Benjamin Irwin experienced aggressive behaviors during his evangelistic journeys, and Muse's reports confirm the suspicions and incidents written in newspapers throughout the state. [4] In recollections in Campbell's text, Muse says

> The early pioneer workers met with determined opposition from many religionists and endured much suffering and privations. Persecution was rife. Many were rocked and had eggs thrown at them. Others met with red pepper being thrown in the straw to bring discomfort to worshippers. Tents were slashed, and doors were locked on them. Some were threatened with by hanging, and others were arrested and spent a night or two in jail. Some towns attempted to bar the preaching of his great gospel truth.[5]

Muse spoke of hardships foisted upon the Pentecostal Holiness ministers in the early years of evangelism in Oklahoman. Battered and accosted at gunpoint, Francis Britton encountered angry mobs and violent actors throughout his travels, some destroying his camping equipment. Oklahoma communities often greeted the new comers with suspicion. In the early years of the twentieth century, local Oklahoma newspapers referenced Pentecostals only in the pejorative of Holy Rollers or Holy Jumpers. This causes some confusion as scandalized reporters saw little distinctive qualities between the

[3] "Farewell Sermon of J.F. Norris," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, April 9, 1913.

[4] Synan and Woods, *Fire Baptized*, 37-40.

[5] Campbell, *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 206.

conservative, generally orthodox Protestant sect of Pentecostalism, with its sometimes exuberant and unique methods of worship, and the more liberal, spiritualist commune sects that invaded Oklahoma with their unorthodox teachings and lewd behaviors. Many Oklahoman newspapers ran nervous articles regarding the varying religious, spiritualists, and commune groups whose worship tendencies were not traditional and often referenced to as a "holy roller," *The Daily Ardmoreite* dedicated a significant amount of space to fearmongering surrounding the religious experimentation of the early twentieth century. It can be difficult to ascertain whether an article concerns a Pentecostal group or a less conventional assembly, as the paper was rarely inquisitive enough to denote such distinctions in its polemic attacks. It also shows how confusing the time was for those outside of the movements and how difficult it was to distinguish one group of people meeting and dancing in a field from another.

In 1906, the paper ran an article cautioning its readers of the "fanatical sect…of Rev. Charles Parham" which was roaming the streets of Topeka, Kansas warning citizens that the final days were upon them. The article continues stating "the 'Holy Rollers' as the sect is popularly known….came into prominence…[because] a California congregation…[intended to] offer up a first born as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God." After somehow tying together Parham's group to child sacrifice, the article notes that the Kansas minister claimed his group was capable of speaking in "all languages" referring to the "miracle mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles." However, the largely inflammatory article does make one interesting note "Reporters and newspaper correspondents have been unable to meet a holy roller at a time when he was under the

"influence."[6] The shift from *xenolalia* to *glossolalia* allowed the believers of speaking in tongues greater liberty in defining the experience as it transitioned from the gift of unlearned known languages to that of a divine, incomprehensible utterance.

At the same time as Parham's group was traversing through Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas, other sectarian groups were wandering through the region. There was an antinomian group referring to themselves as the 'Residents of the Garden of Eden' or 'Golden Rulers' who made an encampment on a farm outside of Oklahoma City.[7] Known to roam the streets in small bands of three and declare their gospel on street corners, the alleged inhabitants of Eden were repeatedly hauled into police stations, "given a severe lecturing, and threatened with imprisonment." The sect claimed it was their constitutional right to practice their faith and no local laws existed to prevent them from evangelizing publically, propelling them to see themselves as martyrs.[8]

Tales of communal spiritualist groups tagged as "holy rollers" continued, and later an article headline, 'AGAINST THE HOLY ROLLERS', warned locals of those living in a "promiscuous manner… [with] nothing doing to occupy their mind or body."[9] According to reports, the group engaged in lewd acts, including performing orgies in front of the members' children.[10] Nine members and their leader, James Sharpe (who also

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[6] "Holy Rollers Stir Topeka", *The Daily Ardmoreite*, July 30, 1906.

[7]'Against the Holy Rollers, *The Tulsa Daily World*, August 11, 1906 and 'Has Seen Visions and Things', *The Tulsa Daily World*, August 22, 1906.

[8] 'Holy Rollers Are Kicking, Say They Are Martyrs', *The Tulsa Daily World*, August 4, 1906.

[9] 'Against the Holy Rollers, *The Tulsa Daily World*, August 11, 1906.

[10] "Holy Rollers Itinerants," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, August 12, 1906.

went by the names 'Adam', 'Father', and 'God Almighty'), were jailed in Oklahoma City for two weeks. After their release, the leader of the 'holy roller' group proclaimed angelic beings communicated with him while imprisoned and persuaded him to lead the believers to Colorado, stating "this is the last Oklahoma will see of him and his followers for some time..," singing as they walked out of town.[11] Another group of religious devotees derogatively named 'holy rollers' began meeting in Atoka. They set up camp outside of town for months. A measles outbreak led to the death of an infant as the group seemingly disregarded the need for medical care. The local community finally broke up the encampment and required the followers to undergo disinfecting treatment prior to leaving Atoka.[12] In 1908, a roving band of naturalist "holy rollers" entered the town of Bromide, Oklahoma to partake of the community's recently renovated and enlarged springs. The band of "religionists" came into the city while singing loudly and accompanied by drums and brass instrumentation. Creating a scandal, this unidentified group stripped naked before entering the springs, its ranks including "five buxom young women" who "horrified the residents…by disrobing and wading out into the cold spring waters singing and praying all the while." According to reports, the mayor had to deputize ten new police officers to control the group and the enraged citizens.[13] Further denouncing the mysterious conceits of ecstatic religious experience, *The Daily Ardmoreite* ran an article about another ill-defined "holy roller" group holding meetings in the "full blood districts

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[11] 'Holy Rollers Leader Seeking Greener Paradise, Followers Out of Jail', *The Tulsa Daily World*, August 14, 1906 and "Holy Rollers Secure Bond," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, August 20, 1906.

[12] 'Bar Holy Rollers', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, September 15, 1913 and 'After Holy Rollers', *Farmers' Champion*, September 25, 1913.

[13] "Holy Rollers at Bromide", *The Daily Ardmoreite*, May 3, 1908.

of the Cherokee nation" titled, "Oppose Holy Rollers." The article accused the style of worship at the camp meeting of causing "George Mayes, an Indiana farmer...[to become] mentally deranged….[and] violent."[14]

The Daily Ardmoreite, having a taste for lurid stories or a distinct mistrust of holy rolling groups (probably both), led with more tales of violence caused by religious enthusiasts. The Carter County paper devoted front page space, sharing room with the latest updates from the frontlines of the war in Europe, to the drowning death of a "holy roller," "a comely woman weight with a rock wired around her neck" and her "fifteen month old baby" from Illinois.[15] The *Daily Ardmoreite* also ran a story on a group divine healers in Illinois who attempted to "beat out the devil" from a "Noah Hickman an epileptic" claiming his illness was "the work of the devil." The alleged healers were charged and fined for assaulting Mr. Hickman.[16]

One of the most evocative headlines from the era, extolled "Man Who Crushes Wife's Head With Ax Say It Was Divine Call, Is A Holy Roller." Earl Stanley, a farmer in the Tulsa area and former Baptist, had recently converted to "the Holy Roller sect of religion." According to Earl, he and his wife entered into a theological argument. As he attempted to convert her, she went to retrieve her bible to provide scriptural support against his newfound faith, Earl, believing he heard God call him, hit her about the face with his ax, and "trampled her into insensibility." The article stated that Earl Stanley had

[14] "Oppose Holy Rollers," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, May 9, 1910.

[15] 'Find Body of Woman: Believed to Be Body of Woman Who Joined the "Holy Rollers"', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, November 13, 1914.

[16] 'Holy Rollers Fined', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, March 8, 1914.

shown no signs of such vicious behavior before and "no unusual manner other than that customary to believers in his religious faith had been seen of him."[17] Another piece referred to the incident as "Almost Chops Wife's Head Off With Ax Over Fit Of Insanity Over Holy Roller Religion", with Earl blaming "the Holy Roller church" saying "They have been having a meeting over there and we have been going regularly. I know that's what was wrong with me."[18]

The most visible of all "Holy Roller" scandals involved the sordid tale of Franz Edmund Creffield, a former officer for the Salvation Army which was born out of the holiness revivals of the nineteenth century and Esther Mitchell. Their tale of ecstatic religion and controversial romance gained national exposure and attention throughout local Oklahoma papers. Creffield led a religious sect known only as the 'Holy Rollers' throughout the Pacific Northwest, settling in Seattle. He renamed himself 'Joshua' and taught an innovative eschatological theology, claiming he was to become the father of the second Christ. The young Esther Mitchell, only fifteen at the time, was to be the mother. Esther's brother George sought to protect his sister's honor by gunning down Creffield. The courts found George Mitchell innocent of murder, prompting Esther to follow her brother's vigilante impulses by shooting him, saying "I tried to shoot him in the same place he shot Mr. Creffield…I knew that if he could kill Joshua, I could kill George by hitting him in the same spot."[19] The story reappeared when Esther Mitchell was released

[17] '"God Told Me To Do It" – Stanley. Man Who Crushes Wife's Head With Ax Says It Was Divine Call Is A "Holy Roller"', *The Tulsa Daily World*, February 25, 1915.

[18] "Almost Chops Wife's Head Off With Ax", *The Daily Ardmoreite*, February 26, 1915.

[19] "Esther Mitchell, Murderess, Execrated", *The Guthrie Leader*, August 27, 1906.

from “the Washington state hospital for the insane” and deemed capable of standing trial. Meanwhile local residents considered erecting a monument to the late George Mitchell.[20]

The stories made it clear that no one associated with the Holy Roller movement was of sound mind. The new radical worship led to libertine behaviors and mental derangement. Tales of believers withholding medical care increased in the state. The acceptance of divine healing led some to doctrines once taught by older ministers such as Benjamin Irwin and rejected by most Pentecostal leaders, that doctors were evil, lacking faith in God. Such radical teachings reached dreadful conclusions when taken to the extremes. In Ardmore, a group of purported “holy rollers” were leaving their children’s health in the hands of divine healing through faith and prayer. Rumors ran through the city of the horrible conditions suffered by some of the parishioners’ children, with reports that at least one child was nearing grave condition. Once news reached the mayor of Ardmore, he acted quickly “ordering the city physician to make an immediate investigation” of the youths health. The mayor told the newspaper that he would forcibly remove any children and jail their parents if they were in danger, stating “that this was too enlightened an age to permit a lot of fanatics to neglect their children that death may result.”[21]

There is another article titled “Holy Roller”, about William Click, who went to trial in McAlester for the death of his son. Click held meetings that appear Pentecostal in

[20] ‘Holy Roller Echo’, *The Daily Ardmoreite*, March 20, 1908 and “Important If True”, *The Tulsa Daily World*, July 31, 1906.

[21] “Trying Prayer Instead of Pain Killer,” *The Daily Ardmoreite*, July 23, 1915.

some nature, as he claimed to have the gift of tongues.[22] He also developed a doctrine of divine healing having "declared his faith in God as a means of saving the child's life." The prosecutors argued that Mr. Click refused medical care and that led directly to his son, James' death. However, the judge required the county attorney to provide evidence showing "the child would have recovered had he been given medical treatment." The prosecutor was not confident in his ability to produce such an argument, and the judge dismissed the case.[23] It is not clear if Click held membership in an organized denomination of the Pentecostal faith, his extreme doctrines led to further generalized headlines again casting the ubiquitous phrase into negative light "Holy Roller Case Was Dismissed, State Was Unable to Prove Child's Death Was to Lack of Medical Aid."[24]

In another ill-fated, frenzied interpretation of healing theology, one of the most dramatic and somber instances, occurred in Bixby. A common aspect of Pentecostal worship is being "slain in the Spirit." This generally refers to "a religious phenomenon in which an individual falls down, the cause being attributed to the Holy Spirit."[25] While attending a revival meeting in Bixby, Frank McCormick apparently experienced the phenomenon of being "slain in the spirit" and fell backwards during worship. McCormick landed on his one-year-old child, gravely injuring the baby. Enraptured "in a moment of fantastic zeal," the group did not seek immediate medical attention. Instead,

[22] "Holy Roller Arrested," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, June 10, 1913.

[23] 'Holy Roller Case Dismissed', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, December 11, 1913.

[24] 'Holy Roller Case Dismissed', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, December 11, 1913.

[25] P.H. Alexander, "Slain in the Spirit," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 1072.

they took the McCormick's child "to the rear of the tent where they prayed over the broken body for over an hour, but the child died." News of the child's death spread quickly across the community and led to the formation of a mob seeking "to teach the Holy Rollers a lesson." However, J.W. Stilts, the town's mayor, Charles Waynier, a Baptist minister, and Otis Spradling organized and managed to get ahead of the mob, warning the revivalists and keeping the angry citizens at bay.[26]

The broad categorization of the holy rollers rhetoric from the local media resulted in misunderstandings of the new churches being established throughout the state. One of the first meetings of the Assemblies of God (which became the largest Pentecostal denomination in America) in the state received the headline "Holy Rollers Camp Meeting On Today." This only added to the confusing popular narrative within the Oklahoma media of labeling any perceived eccentric or outsider religious organization with the broad sweep of the pejorative terminology. This language placed the recently organized Assemblies of God denomination in the same category as proto-cult leader movements, mentally unstable ax murders, spiritualist communes, and any unknown religious group reported upon in the new century.[27]

Ministers were always targets for moral failures, as many in the profession saw it as their occupational duty to rebuke people for their vices and the lives of ethical degradation in which they wallowed. Therefore, when it became apparent that a clergyman fell short of his on exhortations, guilty of the immoralities he spoke adamantly

[26] "Rioting Charged Mayor of Bixby," *The Tulsa Daily World*, September 4, 1921.

[27] "Holy Rollers Camp Meeting On Today", *The Tulsa Daily World*, July 22, 1914.

against, it often made headlines. Itinerant evangelists were prone to their own unique quandaries and community distrust. Fears of white slavery, women stolen and forced into prostitution or immoral circumstances, followed some traveling preachers. Such a controversy struck close to the Pentecostal Holiness Church. In Hartshorne, Oklahoma, a small community that was home to early followers of the denomination, a "holy roller" pastor named J.B. Sturgess went to prison "on a white slave charge" after he convinced a young Arkansas teenager, Elvessie Mclearen to go away with him and his teenage bride, Myrtle.[28] Another "holy roller" minister, Will O'Neal, also was charged with being a white slaver in Oklahoma after taking a young woman throughout the state, Arkansas, Kansas, and Colorado on the promise of marriage. O'Neal though was already married, his wife residing in Texas.[29]

For other evangelists, journeying took a personal toll, with marriages fraught with controversy. Often, feeling a divine call to travel and preach the message they believed was bestowed upon them by God created familial discord. John Wesley remained thirty years in a chaotic marriage refusing to slow his travels at the behest of his wife, leading to a tumultuous relationship.[30] Constantly on the move, Benjamin Irwin took at least three wives and seemingly more women throughout his long pastoral life.[31] Joseph King's first marriage came to ruin after receiving the supernatural summons and with the

[28] "Holy Terror Was This Holy Roller 'Preacher-Slaver'", *The Tulsa Daily World*, July 17, 1917.

[29] "Haire Trail Set For December 7", *The Tulsa Daily World*, November 15, 1920.

[30] Samuel J. Rogal, "John Wesley Takes a Wife," Methodist History, 27:1 (October 1988), 53-54 and John G. McEllhenney, "Divorce" Historical Dictionary of Methodism, ed. Charles Yrigoyen Jr. and Susan E. Warrick, (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 93.

[31] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 77-80 and 87.

wife of his youth refusing to support his new mission. King wrote of the grief and inner sorrow this gave him. He believed for the rest of his life that it was his punishment for "marrying outside of God's will."[32] The new Pentecostal pastors in Oklahoma were not immune to the same frailties of those who came before them.

Moral lapses of those within the movement led to internal controversies, some of which made state headlines. In 1912, the Oklahoma Conference first broached the topic of divorce and remarriage in the church. The doctrinal issue rose to importance due to an episode involving founding member Harry P. Lott, head of the Pentecostal Rescues Mission for Fallen Women, and a leading member of the Fire-Baptized and Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma. [33] Reverend Lott left his wife to support herself and their children, giving all of his money back to missions. Their marriage ended in violence, with Lott allegedly choking his wife Emma, leading to a restraining order and eventual jail time for the reverend. [34] A Reverend A.L. Snider, identified as belonging to the "'Holy Roller' or 'Holiness'" groups, abandoned his wife and children according to an article.[35] In another episode involving a woman caught up in the new religious zeal, Elia May Sparks had all but abandoned her family according to her husband, Clay Sparks. He reported that after converting and joining "the Holy Rollers [she] was preaching and singing from town to town" to the neglect of their home and child.[36] Years passed before

[32] King, *Yet Speaketh*, 52-53 and Moon, *Plowboy*, 44.

[33] Fourth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 3-4.

[34] Minister's Wife Restrains Him, *The Daily Oklahoman*, September 29, 1909 and Minister Fined Sent to Jail, *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 3, 1909.

[35] "'Preacher' Is In Toils Of The Law", *The Daily Ardmoreite*, August 12, 1915.

[36] "The Man on the Street", *The Daily Ardmoreite*, September 12, 1912.

the Conference devised a strict policy, stating nearly two decades later "that those already in the Conference who have been divorced, or are divorced in the future and shall remarry…shall be automatically dropped from the Conference."[37]

Not all reports from the local media were negative. From Ardmore came news of two groups, one only identified as "holy rollers" and another as "Crusaders." The two, according to the newspaper, worked with the poor in the community, specifically noting the "considerable good" accomplished by the Crusaders. However, the mayor saw fit to ask both sects to leave the city amid a recent smallpox outbreak in the area. The mayor temporarily banned preaching on street corners, stating it always engendered the attentions of "a mixed crowd" and considered it "dangerous for public health."[38] McAlester experienced a similar smallpox episode, which they tied to a band of "holy rollers" holding revival meetings day and night in the "old superior court rooms," a building in the center of town. According to reports, the conditions at the meetings were not sanitary and believed to have led to disease. The episode concluded with the sect's expulsion and permanent ban from occupying structures near the core of the city.[39]

As Pentecostalism closed on its first decade, its opposition began to mature in their attacks, while religious moderates saw a possible middle ground. In Durant, a local

[37] Twenty-Third Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 16.

[38] 'Crusaders and Holy Rollers', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, February 12, 1914.

[39] 'Eject Holy Rollers', *The Daily Tulsa World*, May 1, 1915 and 'Holy Rollers Rolled Out', *The Daily Ardmoreite*, May 3, 1915.

article authored by a Mrs. J.B. Dunnagan openly attacked the new religious developments in the state. Dunnagan lamented that:

> We know that there are…communities where the quality of life is defective….Where good roads are not and the postoffice [sic] is miles away…and the church only lives in the memory of a few parents…and no common sense teachings of the Savior of man presented to the rising generation, only in the twisted, emotional and unsatisfying forms of the itenerant [sic] holy roller, holiness and other bands of religious fantasy.[40]

Dunnagan continued, saying that people attend these religious meetings "because it is the only thing offered in the community to break the monotony of life and give them social intercourse." Further, she holds that the fanatic excitement of these services only serve to make "the apathy of life…greater than before." Her solution was to invest and encourage country teachers and Sunday school programs, presumably in traditional denominations, as a form of social calling so that these "bands of religious fantasy" did not lead the fabric of rural community life astray.[41] Dunnagan forgot that most communities, no matter how rural, had other church options. Pentecostalism offered rural adherents an experiential faith, rather than one rooted in doctrinal literacy.

A rare moderate representation of the Pentecostal experience appeared in the popular media of the day. Though at times pandering, a column in *The Tulsa Daily World* titled *The Man About Town* offered a fair look at the new Protestant iteration. "We had heard of the Holy Rollers…and if the reports were true, felt that nothing in vaudeville could compare for the exhibition in store for us." However, the reporter found no

[40] Mrs. J.B. Dunnagan, "Influence Felt, Most in Rural Life," *The Durant Weekly News*, January 1, 1915.

[41] Dunnagan, "Influence Felt, Most in Rural Life," The Durant Weekly News, January 1, 1915.

evidence of illicit or bizarre actions that April evening in 1916. After hearing a man speak in tongues that he was unable to identify, and was particularly moved by the testimony shared by a convert from Catholicism, he found the group acceptable, writing, "if the intensity of the hour we experienced could be perpetuated without the extremes, this sect would become a welcomed addition to the Christian family."[42] While dismissive and patronizing, the article displays a significant move toward a more balanced outlook on Pentecostalism in Oklahoma.

Ministers held that it was the truth of their message, causing the Holy Spirit to tug and pull upon their hearts to repent and flee from sin and into the arms of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, that resulted in an antagonistic spirit born from the sinful hearts of the convicted. However, there is a potentially different interpretation. Rising in an age of religious upheaval, most were distrustful of the many new spiritual fads, novel doctrines, and less traditional means of worship. The revivalists came into new towns, understanding it as their mission from God to condemn the local populace for the current state of their lives, informing them of the errors of their family churches. They simultaneously introduced a zealous form of worship that included trembling, shaking, falling, and speaking in unknown languages. These preachers' methods were likely translated by their audiences as aggressive and threatening toward the local community.

The Pentecostal movement nationwide also had a socialist contingency. Editors of periodicals with a national subscriber base, such as E.N. Bell, an important member of the early Assemblies of God, published articles with socialist and pacifist leanings. Some

[42] "The Man About Town", *The Tulsa Daily World*, April 4, 1916.

early Pentecostal authors saw the concept of belonging to God's kingdom less metaphorically, casting the socio-political machinations of The Great War as the problems of warmongers and money hoarders. One pastor argued "In the name of 'Patriotism' we are urged to go to with other Christians…we are to lie to other members of Christ…we are to rob our Christian brethren…to kill, maim, and torture…the children of our heavenly Father."[43] In 1914, at the outset of the European war, Charles Parham, one of the founding fathers of Pentecostalism, wrote an article titled *War! War! War.* It opened with, "for that nation is imbecile which retains its existence through…the exploits of war. We hang our heads in shame to see Christian nations and individuals yield themselves to the embrace of the Moloch-God, Patriotism."[44]

Pentecostals made up a distinct section of conscientious objectors during the war, including young men from Oklahoma. Men referred to only as "holy rollers" came under attack from exemption boards in Oklahoma counties, as many of their cases were dismissed and they were encouraged to "appeal the case direct to President Wilson" if they did not like the board's judgments.[45] However, the "holy rollers" were not unique in their quest for exemption from war. The Tulsa Daily World, under the title *Draft Mill Grist*, noted that of an initial 752 Oklahomans called, only 58 failed to claim an exemption upon the first call and immediately went up for certification.[46] Jay Beaman,

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[43] Samuel Booth-Clibborn, "Should a Christian Fight?," *Early Pentecostals on Nonviolence and Social Justice: A Reader*, ed. Brian K Pipkin and Jay Beaman, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2016), 13.

[44] Charles Parham, "War! War! War!," *Early Pentecostals on Nonviolence and Social Justice*, ed. Pipkin and Beaman, 19.

[45] '"Holy Rollers" Not Exempt', *Tulsa Daily World*, September 5, 1917.

[46] 'Draft Mill Grist', *Tulsa Daily World*, September 5, 1917.

preeminent scholar on pacifism within the worldwide Pentecostal movement, using draft records and church rolls, postulates that one third of all Pentecostals drafted into service registered as a contentious objector or for non-combatant duty during World War I.[47] As one minister penned,

> Our citizenship is not of this world, our citizenship is in heaven…We belong to the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world are not allied. When two kingdoms go to war with other nations…their interests are mutual, they are allied one with the other. Christians are separate from the world and are subjects of God's kingdom, a kingdom of peace.[48]

Pentecostal pacifism was motivated through a distinct sense of being separate from the world around them, believing that the politics of earth did not concern them. After the close of The Great War, the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church adopted a resolution stating "we as a church are opposed to the bearing of arms and military service."[49]

Other religious groups in Oklahoma opposed the war, such as those influenced by the socialist message. In Roll, Oklahoma during the summer of 1917 Rev. O.E. Enfield used his platform as minister to preach against the war effort in America.[50] In his seminal

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[47] Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origin, Development, and Rejection of Pacific Belief among the Pentecostals*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), pages 8-11 of his Introduction to the 2009 edition and 29-30.

[48] William Burt McCafferty, "Should Christians Go to War?," *Early Pentecostals on Nonviolence and Social Justice*, ed. Pipkin and Beaman, 29-30.

[49] Twelfth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 15.

[50] Jim Bissett, Agrarian Socialism in America: Marx, Jefferson, and Jesus in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1904-1920, (87. Enfield appears less of a pacifist due to his arrest a year later for "promoting armed resistance to the United States government." Bissett, 88.

study, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943,* James R. Green examines the success of socialism in Oklahoma and the surrounding states. He notes that Oklahoma had over 100 elected socialist officials from the local to state level and over 12,000 party members.[51] Green also points out some distinctive qualities of the Oklahoma socialist movement. He describes the radical party as taking their cues from the revivalist religions that populated the landscape, forming a party "filled with emotionalism and moralism….the southwestern Socialist appeal was more moralistic than materialistic."[52] The members of the party predominately came from rural towns and farms (over eighty percent), in contrast to the national movement that saw a proportional dispersal of membership locales.[53] This meant the socialist party members residing in the southwest were not privy to the popular speakers and intellectuals of the day. They converted to socialist ideology through the written word. Their socialism stemmed not from Marx or Engels, but rather through "Anglo-American 'socialists'" and literature made available through periodicals, such as the *Appeal to Reason,* which had over 60,000 subscribers in Oklahoma and Texas.[54]

Jim Bissett contends "the profoundly religious nature of the Oklahoma movement was pivotal to" socialism's success in the area.[55] Green speaks of the religious tone of socialist extollers in the region, as the communist utopia found an easy theological

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[51] James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), xi.

[52] Green, *Grass-Roots*, xiv.

[53] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 130.

[54] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 134-5.

[55] Bissett, *Agrarian Socialism*, 86.

parallel in the Christian eschatological doctrine of postmillennialism. He writes, "Socialist millennialism generally lacks the vengeful, cataclysmic quality of holiness religion, as preached by sects like the Pentecostals, but an apocalyptic, premillennial tone frequently crept in."[56] However, Burbank argues that a subset of Oklahoman socialists "envisaged the coming of a universal harmony…under the reign of Christ only after standing at Armageddon to battle with an oppressive and wicked capitalist class."[57] The socialist Christians defended their faith and political persuasion, arguing that they were fulfilling Jesus' message, condemning the wealthy and ruling class just as Christ had 2,000 years prior.[58] While the national socialist body in America attempted to distance itself from any form of religious debate, in the southwest, according to Green, the party was more discerning. Party members looked down on the well-established, mainline churches, while holding sympathetic to "poor people's churches."[59] The southwestern socialists distinguished between Christianity and "churchianity."[60] For many active socialists in Oklahoma, "it would have seemed unnecessary, if not…blasphemous, to make the distinction between politics and religion" some party administrators deemed appropriate.[61]

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[56] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 164-5.

[57] Garin Burbank, When Farmers Voted Red: The Gospel of Socialism in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1910-1924, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 16.

[58] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 165-6.

[59] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 166.

[60] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 168.

[61] Burbank, *When Farmers Voted Red*, 15.

Additionally, while the American socialists at-large were not openly antagonistic to the Roman Catholic Church, the party in the American southwest harbored strong anti-Catholic sentiments.[62] In this manner, southwestern socialists matched their Bolshevik brethren better than their compatriots. While Catholicism experienced a time of growth throughout nineteenth-century Russia, "the communist seizure of power…put an end to this favourable situation….the Bolsheviks…inherited anti-Catholic stereotypes and prejudices…from European anticlericalism."[63] The Pentecostal Holiness Church taught a deep anti-Catholic paranoia. Their annual church discipline included a warning against the Roman Church and its alleged quest for world domination, from at least 1917 throughout the purview of this study, stating,

> The absolute and eternal separation of church and state is a fundamental principle in the constitutional law and polity of the American nation….In view of this all-important fact, we can but place upon any deviation there from our unqualified condemnation. This declaration leads us to note…the subtle encroachment into every branch of our government…of the Roman Catholic Church, seeking to fill…the false claim of the Roman pontiff to dictate all the affairs of all nations and governments of the whole world. We deny such a claim, and pledge…to wage unflinching warfare against…the Roman Catholic Church. [64]

Green notes the involvement of the Church of Christ and Southern Baptists in the early part of the movement, though he summarily dismisses the connection as one regarding class and happenstance. For Green, the socialist connection to those congregations drew upon the economic make-up of those churches, primarily in rural

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[62] Burbank, *When Farmers Voted Red*, 28-31.

[63] Sergei Filatov and Lyudmila Vorontsova, "Catholic and Anti-Catholic Traditions in Russia," Religion, State & Society, 28:2000. 70-73.

[64] Discipline of The Pentecostal Holiness Church, (Royston, GA: Press of the Publishing House of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1925).

areas with a poor membership. However, his tone alters regarding the Pentecostals. Green argues, "Indeed, there seemed to be some connection between these holiness sects and the early Socialist cadres." Pointing out that Eugene Debs spoke at a holiness meeting in Durant in 1906, and that "the enemies of socialism certainly saw a connection between economic and religious radicalism."[65] Green, however, pulls back from examining the involvement of Pentecostals in the rural socialist movement, arguing, "The Pentecostal movement in the Southwest was not large enough before World War I to contribute to the growth of any political party" and limits the religious sect's impact to "the black ghettoes of Houston and other cities."[66] Green recognizes that the socialist party filled a void in rural life, as church attendance in smaller communities declined, which Green determined as a linking of the preacher to the rich and powerful who resided in the cities. Socialism, if temporarily, became the balm, often couched in biblical and moral language rather than the traditional dialectical materialism of Marxist ideology, for their socio-political ills.[67]

Garin Burbank and Jim Bissett both note these peculiarities among Oklahomans specifically, observing how local weekly papers authored by members of the Oklahoma socialist movement often spoke with an evangelical language and offered to anyone who might read that it was through socialism that a "universal harmony and well-being under the reign of Christ" was underway.[68] Pastors, P.M. Smith and J.A. Simpson, drew the ire of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church for teaching the gospel

[65] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 172 and Bissett, *Agrarian Socialism*, 88.

[66] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 173.

[67] Green, *Grass-Roots*, 174-5.

[68] Burbank, *When Farmers Voted Red*,15-6 and Bissett, Agrarian Socialism, 88-91.

of Marx. However, it is interesting to note that the committee failed to condemn the specific teaching of Marxist ideology. Rather, the committee rejected it as an alternative or addition to the message of Christ.[69] Given the church's willingness to revoke ordination for apostasy and openly accuse Catholics of a conspiracy to overthrow the American and all world governments, it seems they would not hesitate to aggressively denounce socialism as a whole if they perceived it as antithetical to their mission. This rebuke was similar to R.E. Dooley, a high-ranking official of the Socialist party of Oklahoma. Addressing the issue of religion and the party, he asserted that "'theological argument…draws away the interest from the essential principles [and] clouds the main issues."[70]

Steven Kite perceives some forms of Baptist churches and Holiness and Pentecostal denominations as tailored made for rural farmers, places that gave comfort and community to isolated residents. Some historians assert that the role of Pentecostals in the party was inevitable, arguing that Oklahoma congregations grew along economic class as much as it did doctrinally, giving credence to the idea of that as farmers turned toward socialism, they brought into their churches. Kite mentions the role of gossip in church and muses that the poor lost access to power by lacking social connection in more affluent churches, while their initial exposure to socialist doctrines may have come through this type of offhanded discourse at their local churches.[71]

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[69] Fifth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2-3.

[70] Burbank, *When Farmers Voted Red*, 14.

[71] Steven Knoche Kite, *After the Fall: Radicalism and Reform on the Great Plains, 1896-1923* (PhD diss. Oklahoma State University, 2003), 126-127 and Bissett, Agrarian Socialism, 98.

The short-lived red revolution among Oklahomans and some Pentecostals, while exciting, was not lasting in its impact for the churches. Pentecostals never adopted the optimistic eschatology of postmillennialism, instead accepting across most denominations the more pessimistic dispensational premillennialism. The doctrine was born in the nineteenth century from John Nelson Darby, an Englishmen ordained in Church of Ireland and founder of the Plymouth Brethren Church. This involved the rapture and horrific tribulations through a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation.[72] While it is a logical leap to suggest this was a key component in Pentecostal reticence to socialism as a whole, it meant that the future hope of Pentecostals was not achievable through a socialist utopia on earth. The return of Christ was imminent in Pentecostal theology and that alone would bring the ultimate redemption of all things.

The preeminence of eschatology in their theological system gave them a unique perspective on the place of women in the church. Women held positions of authority in the Holiness movement and female pastors belonged in meaningful numbers to Benjamin Irwin's Fire-Baptized Holiness Association.[73] At the Azusa Street Mission, Lucy Farrow and Florence Crawford played essential roles, with some even arguing that it was Farrow and not Seymour who organized the revival.[74] Crawford was a former member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; a board member at the Azusa Street revival with William J. Seymour, pastor-evangelist, and primary editor of *The Apostolic Faith*, (the

[72] Mark Sweetnam and Crawford Gribben, "J.N. Darby and the Irish Origins of Dispensationalism," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Vol 52, No 3. (September 2009), 569, 571, 573-574.

[73] Synan and Woods, *Fire-Baptized*, 49 and 51.

[74] Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 158 and 163.

periodical of Azusa, and founder of The Apostolic Faith Church in Portland.[75] Another example was the oratory showperson Aimee Semple McPherson and the Four-Square Gospel Church she founded in 1927.

The role women played in Pentecostalism followed a familiar path. Max Weber writes, "The religion of the disprivileged classes, in contrast to the aristocratic… is characterized by a tendency to allot equality to women." Weber observered that "does not…imply that women have equal privileges." He also states that this realm of a perceived equality is brief, lasting only as long as "the pneumatic manifestations of charisma are valued as hallmarks of…religious exaltation." Once the sect begins to adopt the elements of institutionalization, a standard male-centric conformity takes hold and the "pneumatic manifestations among women… [are] regarded as dishonorable and morbid."[76] Weber's observations are accurate to an extent regarding Pentecostalism. Many of the "pneumatic manifestations" remained within the regular worshipping life of the Pentecostal movement; but the move away from female involvement in the pastorate was swift. Following Weber's work, Barfoot and Sheppard relate a similar story among the women in the early life of the Assemblies of God. They found that women outnumbered men nearly 2:1 as late as 1936. During the period of what they called "Prophetic Pentecostalism", which lasted from the Topeka school in 1901 through the 1920s, there was marked adherence to a "distinctly prophetic interpretation of the

[75] Margaret English de Alminana, "Florence Crawford and Egalitarian Precedents in Early Pentecostalism," in *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry: Informing a Dialogue on Gender*, Church, and Ministry, (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 103-4, 110 and 123.

[76] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Translated by Ephraim Fischoff, (London: Methuen & Co., 1963), 104.

Pentecostal experience."[77] This meant, among other things, an emphasis on the biblical text of Joel 2:23 and 28:

> Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain….And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.[78]

Believing they were in the era of "the latter rain," meaning the final days prior to the culmination of human history with the return of Christ being imminent, held that their "daughters shall prophesy." This meant that women receiving the "call" from God to preach was a divine necessity. However, as the twentieth century tarried and denominations grew large, the functions of the preacher turned toward the traditional roles of tending to the local church and organizing the administrative needs of the institution. By 1927, the Assemblies of God moved away from a simple calling, and rules for ordination were drawn with official committees and bodies designed to define and judge who could and could not be a pastor.[79] Elaine Lawless, author of multiple articles and monographs on women ministers in the Pentecostal tradition, observes that while "women dominate the services" numerically, engaged more thoroughly and wholly "in the ecstatic behaviors" regarding going "into trance, jerk, fall down, speak in tongues; and…[going] forward for special healing," they remain under a strong patriarchal

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[77] Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classic Pentecostal Churches," *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 22 No 1 (Sep 1980) 2-17, 2-4.

[78] Joel 2:23 and Joel 2:28, King James Version, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel+2&version=KJV

[79] Barfoot and Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Pentecostalism", 11 and 14.

hierarchy of power and oversight. Lawless shows that "women can be preachers…they are rarely pastors."[80]

The Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma followed the anticipated patterns. Conference roll calls of the list of Pastorates, Ordained Pastors, Local Preachers, and Missionary Workers show the disparity in the church. Throughout the first twenty years, the denomination always had a local church pastored by a woman, but rarely more than two or three in any given year.[81] By the beginning of the 1930s, up to ten women held a pastorate at any given time.[82] Women occasionally found themselves appointed to some other positions of authority. In 1914, Annie Armstrong occupied a chair on the "Committee on Mission Work" along with Lott and a C.L. Smith. She was an ordained minister from Cumberland, Oklahoma (an unincorporated town in Marshall County bordering Lake Texoma) who pastored the Pentecostal Holiness congregation in the nearby High Hill.[83] Fay Stark, wife of the sitting Superintendent in 1916, S.E. Stark, held a position on the Sunday School committee at the eighth annual state conference.[84] Adherents to the Holy Ghost religion were more open to a female pastorate than the vast majority of churches before them, especially among groups one could consider theologically conservative. Lawless's work argues that it is not through a belief in the

[80] Elaine J. Lawless, "Shouting for the Lord: The Power of Women's Speech in the Pentecostal Religious Service," *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol 96, No 382 (Oct-Dec 1983), 434.

[81] Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church minutes through 1929

[82] Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

[83] Sixth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 2 and Eighth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 10.

[84] Eighth Annual Oklahoma State Convention of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, 3.

equality of genders that Pentecostals provide room in the pulpit for women. Rather, it was their belief in the supremacy of a perceived call from the Holy Spirit on an individual woman's life to preach that allowed them to defy traditional gender roles.[85]

Kristen D. Welch, who studied "the rhetorical heritage" of women preachers among Oklahoman International Pentecostal Holiness churches, describes the call as "an experience where one is singled out by God to preach and is not something everybody has to do or even can do." Welch perceived a consistent theme of reticence to accept the "call" to preach among Pentecostal women.[86] Dollie York worked in conjunction with her husband, Dan, throughout Oklahoma. She began her career in Wolf, Indian Territory preaching at a revival in 1905 organized by L.G. Chilcoat and an S.B. Gosey.[87] Their story is preserved in a small text Daniel York authored in his old age. He became a lay Methodist itinerant, holding his first revival meeting in 1897. After marrying Dollie Fagan the following year, the two took up preaching with the Salvation Army in Waxahachie, Texas, primarily serving in prisons.[88] Daniel recounts the response his holiness message received: "We were whipped, sandbagged, pour slop water on us, egged, blew beer foam in our faces, threw snakes on us, and threw rocks and pieces of fence post at me while I was preaching."[89] Their first contact with Pentecostalism came

[85] Elaine J. Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religion*, 17, 24, 29, 33-36, 40-41, 45, 48-49, 52-54.

[86] Welch, 'Women with the Good News', 61-2.

[87] York and York, 6.

[88] York and York, 2-5.

[89] York and York, 6.

from a Myrtle Dixon and Sister Willard Armstrong who told them of a minister in Ardmore fresh from the Azusa revival. The Yorks accepted the new message; however, many of their colleagues did not and "took a stand against" them. The couple left Ardmore, moving on to the holiness school in Beulah. Many of their fellow workers at the school accepted the new Pentecostal gift of glossolalia at the 1907 meeting held at Lamont with Glenn Cook and J.H. King. The Yorks themselves experienced speaking in tongues at a 1908 revival in Foss, Oklahoma.[90] The evangelists then set up a brush arbor camp meeting around Pauls Valley and found success, stating that up to 1,500-2,000 people came nightly to hear their unique message.[91] The Pentecostal duo moved on to Stratford where they spent four years establishing a church and working throughout the area. In 1913, they began to build a school working closely with Dan and Rexie Evans, who were both former teachers. The school struggled internally about doctrinal debates, fought for funding, and suffered blows from nature, which destroyed much their building in 1915.[92] The Yorks then found themselves in Seminole to build a church and discovered unrest, though they believed their work was successful. However, their next stops as Pentecostal Holiness church planters in Ravia, Pontotoc, and Ada left Dan feeling like "a defeated man."[93] However, the Yorks went back to Ada in 1920, staying two years and building a church there under the leadership of Dan Evans.[94] They

[90] York and York, 6-8.

[91] York and York, 10.

[92] York and York, 12.

[93] York and York, 14-15.

[94] York and York, 15.

sustained their ministry through the meager offerings they collected and subsistence farming, often left in the hands of Dollie and their children, who joined their father on the road as they were able.[95] Dan described her as "this little dark, sun-burned woman with black keen eyes who saw everything as it was. She had long black, straight hair that was never cut or bobbed." He doted on his wife referring to her as "this little heroine soldier" who comforted him and supported him when he was weak in body and faith.[96] While Daniel York complimented Dollie and her preaching talents, she was always the other option when the men tired or he was unable to perform. Dollie's life was one built to serve and support the ministry of her husband, like so many preachers' wives before her. However, unlike most of those, Dollie received the opportunity to use her own voice from time to time.

While Pentecostalism was never a progressive egalitarian movement, at times it was radical in the freedom it gave to women in comparison to other theologically conservative churches. However, in other areas the movement and the Pentecostal Holiness Church fell into traditional gender roles. As Grant Wacker points out, gender politics were never their goal, but rather it was fulfilling their prophetic beliefs in spreading the millennialist message of the imminent return of their Lord.[97]

Pentecostals in Oklahoma navigated their way through an eccentric religious landscape that both baffled locals and drew their ire. Additionally, the followers pushed the boundaries of teaching, working out the logistics of divine healing with grave

[95] York and York, 18.

[96] York and York, 20.

[97] Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 159.

consequences in some instances. Early Pentecostals throughout the nation and Oklahoma were prone to counter cultural leanings. Politically, many in the state objected to being drafted into World War I on religious grounds, while some ministers promoted socialist doctrines from the pulpit. As Pentecostalism moved away from sectarianism and toward traditional denominational tropes, the movement struggled to create a coherent theology around its view of women in church. Progressive on the surface, women serving as evangelists and ordained pastors adhered to Pentecostal eschatological interpretations, but never successfully integrated them into their generally conservative perspective on gender roles in the church and personal life.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

Pentecostalism in Oklahoma was met with trepidation in the first decades of the twentieth century. Its radical forms of religious enthusiasm tore through the countryside shaking, trembling, and speaking in its own unknown language. While there were varying antecedents to the movement, one vital precursor was from the 1890s, Benjamin H. Irwin's Fire Baptized Holiness group. After the fall of Irwin's unique teachings, Joseph H. King steered the church into the new century adhering to primarily conventional Holiness doctrines, until the denomination as a whole converted to the Pentecostal message of *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues, by 1907.

In Oklahoma, what was once the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association, a movement of theological innovators who were searching for a faith abundant with energy and vitality, became a more mature church body with an ever-growing membership and institutional oversight. The Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma enjoyed successes through the difficult work of itinerant evangelism. The church found stalwarts willing to go anywhere, even those offering to abandon their marriages and forsake money to be at the beck and call of the church. The assembly also discovered there were many unwilling to commit so wholly to the cause. While celebrating victories tallied by the number of souls sanctified and spirits baptized, they also routed out lazier ministers and those

teaching any other than their approved gospel. The nascent denomination wrestled with its prophetic beliefs in women preachers and its actual view of the role of females in home and society. Social issues rose throughout the Progressive Era and the congregations saw themselves standing with prohibitionists' and against conscription during The Great War. From 1909 through the 1920s the denomination gradually transitioned away from many of its counter cultural tenets toward traditional institutional hierarchy, well-defined roles for all members, salaried staff, and professional clergy. By 1930, the foundation was laid for the unprecedented domestic and international growth in a post-World War II world.

The early practitioners of Pentecostalism, nationally and in Oklahoma, were without immediate allies. Adherence to speaking in tongues, being slain in the spirit, and other exuberant forms of worship alienated them from fellow evangelicals. Their strong belief in biblical literalism and penchant to be distrustful of the educated, kept them far from the halls of mainline denominations and a deep-seated paranoia of the Roman Catholic Church placed them staunchly in the American anti-Catholic tradition. An unwavering commitment to *glossolalia,* united themselves to one another, while a plainspoken message tied to a tireless revivalist ethic allowed them to overcome constant hardship to expand the scope and breadth of their number.

As the century moved on, the Pentecostal Holiness Church shed many of its counter-cultural views as it transitioned away from a sectarian identity to evangelical

institutional norms. It relied upon ministers converted from other churches or novice preachers haphazardly traversing the countryside throughout much of the first decade. As the denomination entered the 1920s, the roles and expectations of ministers were defined. Restrictions were placed on how high women could achieve within the church. Internal educational programs were mandated and denominational colleges built to instruct their predominately lay clergy. By 1930, the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma had two state conferences and given rise to many of the state conferences throughout western America. Additionally, the work of the Oklahoman congregations laid the institutional foundation for the church to expand globally.

Born in 1906, Pentecostalism by the 1930s was establishing itself as a new and vibrant branch of Protestant Christianity. By the country's bi-centennial, the many branches of "the Holy Spirit religion" was home to over three percent of the Christian population in America, expanding to nearly thirteen percent by 2010.[1] In Oklahoma, the Pentecostal Holiness Church continued its growth throughout the twentieth century, nearing 30,000 adherents by close of the millennium.[2] The International Pentecostal Holiness Church entered the second decade of the twenty-first century boasting over 250,000 members in the United States and over four million globally.[3] The early

[1] Atlas of Pentecostalism, 88. http://www.atlasofpentecostalism.net/ (accessed April 1, 2018).

[2] Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 225.

[3] International Pentecostal Holiness Manual 2009-2013 (Franklin Springs, GA: LifeSprings Resources, 2009), 8.

Oklahoman Pentecostals played a direct role in laying the institutional foundations that allowed the spread of the Pentecostal Holiness Church throughout the world.

EPILOGUE

Further Study and Beyond Oklahoma

It took scholars nearly eight decades into the twentieth century to take Pentecostalism seriously as a critical movement in American and global religious life. Since the late 1970s academic research from multiple disciplines have converged on Pentecostalism and its people, spanning in scope from studies of individual to worldwide narratives. Over time scholarly interest has shifted away from an emphasis on historical and theological origins toward study of its phenomenal growth: from Latin America, throughout Africa, into Southeast Asia, and dotted around Europe and Russia. The pursuit of global studies opens additional research opportunities for historians hoping to add to the understanding of this influential movement and the people it attracts. Local and state studies are lacking and provide ample opportunity to further understand the impact of the Pentecostal people on the American and global religious landscape.

A comprehensive study of the development of the Pentecostal institutions in the Oklahoma is now necessary to determine whether the adherents came from Holiness backgrounds or immigrated from other religious families. How Pentecostals influenced the religious development of the state, and whether the new Protestant sect brought in new members into the Christian fold or supplanted older religious institutions is another area for further research. A more thorough understanding of the economic demographics

of the adherents and ministers in the state would be a valuable contribution to understanding the region and the movement at a national level. Answering how members of Pentecostal congregations began to find access to positions of local and state power is vital to understanding greater social acceptance of the belief in society. In-depth studies on the public lives of Pentecostals, their interactions with their local economy and political life would be elucidating.

Focusing on the evolution of women within the state is a vibrant area for future research. A more systematic understanding of female appointments to local pastorates across the breadth of Pentecostal institutions in Oklahoma is a fascinating topic for future examination. Looking at the prevalence of women in the pastorate from the Holiness churches through the various Pentecostal congregations, analyzing the locations of their pastorate, population size, and lengths of continuous appointment in contrast to their male counterparts would add great value to the understanding of women in leadership positions from the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Such a study would also allow the field to better understand the evolution of gender roles from the two religious groups. This work did not detect a significant change until the Pentecostal Holiness Church entered the 1930s, and it is not clear if those points of data were aberrations or the beginning of a new pattern. Further research on how Pentecostalism affected the black community in the state and the rise of the religious belief among Latinos and first generation Americans throughout Oklahoma, would offer insight into Oklahoma religious and socio-economic development. Religion as a topic is still a significantly untapped

construct for academic studies of Oklahoma and Pentecostalism represents is a fraction of what potential lies before future historians and scholars.

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